MORAL ADVENTURE

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MORAL ADVENTURE

(*Reprinted from the book* ADVENTURE)

BY

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INTRODUCTION

ONE of the two essays which made up my contribution to the book *Adventure* is a discussion from the standpoint of the modern world of the problem of conduct—more especially in regard to Sex. The other essays in that volume —which is a kind of sequel to my book *Reality*—treat of the relation of Religion and Science; and of the sense in which Personality can be ascribed to God, and Divinity to Christ. The practical difficulties of life, however, in an age of ever-changing ideas are keenly felt in circles where no great interest is taken in these other questions; and many friends have pressed for a reprint of this essay as a separate booklet. The publishers have, therefore, decided to respond to this request.

In the teaching of Christ, morality is based primarily on love—love of God and love of man. Popular Christianity has based it mainly upon fear—of punishment, in this world or the next. But for the present generation, Hell has lost its terrors; which means that what it con-

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siders moral will be determined, not by tradition, but by ideals. It is a generation peculiarly susceptible to the summons to adventure—provided that the adventure be given its line of direction by an aspiration towards high ends which is informed by a realistic study of the facts. It is in a spirit of adventure, seriously enterprised and *constructive* in aim, that the problems of practical conduct are most naturally approached by the best minds of to-day.

This essay is, in effect, an attempt to vindicate the rightness of this approach. More than half of it is devoted to a discussion of the Ethics of Sex. To some this may seem a disproportionate amount of the whole; yet, even so, I have had to leave undiscussed several important aspects of the subject. But my object in writing has been, not so much to give my (perhaps not very valuable) advice on details of conduct, as to suggest a point of view—one which differs fundamentally, alike from the ethic implied in Judge Lindsey's works, and from that "morality of taboo" against which, not without good reason, he protests.

Morality, as I understand it, is not primarily a matter of inhibition or prohibition. It is an attempt to realize the positively good—social and individual. But the realization of the good

will be impeded or defeated by any conduct which is anti-social in its effects; or which has a tendency, either to coarsen the inner quality of mind, or to impair the higher self-respect, of the individual. In morality, as elsewhere, one cannot eat one's cake and also have it; the avoidance of evil is a condition, and a necessary condition, of the attainment of good. Nevertheless, though morality is impossible without the strength of character which is capable of saying No, its primary aim is positive—the realization of the maximum good, for the race and for the individual. To a being essentially social, nothing less than this can be in any adequate sense "self-realization."

But the goodness of what is good depends largely on the extent to which it is freely chosen, because spontaneously recognized as desirable. Morality, then, should begin, not so much by telling people what to do, as what to *want* to do. But can anyone, who is not a mere butterfly, be sure exactly what he or she wants to do—I mean in the very depths of the self, apart from the transient impulse of the moment—without serious reflection on the meaning and purpose of life, and on the social and psychological consequences of different lines of conduct? This age, at any rate, is

seeking for a morality which rests, not on rules laid down by authority, but on principles and values intelligently apprehended. And that is the kind of morality which Christ bade men to seek.

B. H. STREETER

The Queen's College, Oxford
21st November 1928

MORAL ADVENTURE

SYNOPSIS

Part I

IN SEARCH OF MORALITY

Slave Morality

The fear of Hell logically entails an ethic of "safety first"; nevertheless it has never quite prevailed against the call to adventure which sounds in the words and acts of Jesus.

The Renaissance, though in Science and Art a grandly constructive experiment, in Morals was mainly a negative revolt.

Hence the moral revival of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation was largely a conservative reaction. Even Protestant ethics were *in theory* "world-denying"; and their ultimate sanction was still the supernatural torture chamber.

To-day, Hell is an idea which excites to ridicule more often than to fear. But the traditional picture of Hell ought not to be confused with the essentially different conceptions that right choice has eternal consequences, and that the Reign of Law holds in the sphere of conduct.

Popular morality is largely a survival of a morality

based on fear; it requires a new basis in *principle*, clearly understood.

Nietzsche and Havelock Ellis

The last half-century resembles the Renaissance in being an epoch of moral revolt; but is unlike it in that leaders of thought are interested in morality.

Summary statement, and critical appreciation, of Mr. Havelock Ellis's conception of the "Dance of Life"—an attempt to make ethics a branch of aesthetics, with a scientific basis in the study of the Psychology of Sex.

Ethics, being both a science and an art, must criticise accepted views and must, under the right conditions, admit experiment.

Nietzsche's influence has been greater on the Continent than in England or America. His aim was ethical construction, and his summons to a life of heroism has points of contact with the teaching of Christ. But his actual contribution to ethics has been mainly negative; largely because his central conception, the Will to Power, is empty of positive content—and even neurotic.

The Ethics of Christ

Christ offers neither law, system nor philosophy; to Him conduct is the art of living. He solves ethical problems, not with a rule, but with a paradox. This attitude is logically consequent on His conception of God.

The rediscovery of the historic Jesus was begun by St. Francis. A possible effect of modern criticism.

One result of the artistic form of Christ's teaching is that its validity is unaffected by lapse of time; it has the eternal appeal which is the prerogative of great art.

There is also a warrior quality about the teaching of Christ. Like Nietzsche, but with a significant difference, He says, "Live dangerously."

Content can be given to a summons to adventure only by giving it a direction. The content so given by Christ includes, but in a richer form, both the aesthetic end desiderated by Mr. Havelock Ellis and the "beyond-man" dream of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche for the modern world represents the Stoic outlook, Havelock Ellis that of Epicurus at its highest level. But Epicureanism has never been able to maintain itself at that level; and the literature of the day reflects the disillusionment which inevitably follows its acceptance. Epicureanism is pessimism in disguise.

But if life is not a dance but a battle, its ills can be borne cheerfully as incidental to a great adventure.

Part II

CODE AND EXPERIMENT

What is Morality?

The existence of society depends on co-operation; this is possible only if its members act in accordance with certain generally accepted rules and understandings laid down by law, custom or etiquette, which collectively may be styled "the Code." Co-operation breaks down unless individuals can count on one another to act *as if under contract* to do what is prescribed by the Code.

Morality is the spirit of which the Code is the embodiment. For it motive is fundamental; it is, there-

fore, ready to go beyond what the letter of the Code demands. It "plays the game"; and, when possible, it seeks to amend the Code in order to "improve the game."

The accepted Code in any society is its *organizing principle*. Since the development of civilisation has been largely haphazard, the existing organisation of society is dangerously defective.

This need for reform constitutes a call to moral adventure. But a prior call is to do one's individual duty. At times this involves adventure.

A part of every one's duty is periodically to reconsider what his duty is. The attempt to do this will usually show that he is neglecting the opportunity for some social service.

Experiment and Adventure

Social progress is to be achieved, not by the abolition of organisation but by producing a better; this applies especially to an accepted code of ethics.

The analogy between an accepted Code and a scientific hypothesis—both are principles of organisation, the one for acting, the other for knowing.

Three ways in which moral experiment in the true sense must be analogous to scientific experiment.

Moral adventure, while recognising the contractual character of the Code, and therefore the primacy of justice, aims at going beyond justice.

Discussion of the occasions on which a moral experiment involves a breach of the Code.

For adventure to be moral, the maxim "Live dangerously" must be supplemented and controlled by "Live constructively."

Part III

THE ETHICS OF SEX

Difficulty of the Investigation

Reasons why a more detailed discussion of the morality of sex seems advisable. The subject is specially difficult on account of the need of estimating how much allowance is to be made for *unconscious* prejudice in the investigator—whether the result of revolt against the principles of his own early training or of allegiance to them.

A second difficulty, which arises from the wide range of relevant scientific knowledge, assumes manageable dimensions if we recollect that the method of science is to start from an *accepted hypothesis.* We must, therefore, begin by a cross-examination of currently accepted principles of sexual morality.

Sex and Taboo

In the mind of the ordinary person these may seem to rest on something little better than "taboo." But Natural Selection operates among taboos; hence there is a presumption that taboos concerned with so tempestuous a matter as sex, which have been exposed to the turmoil of European thought and practice for twenty-five centuries, rest upon a basis in experience.

In that respect the principle defended by a taboo may be analogous to a scientific hypothesis which has stood the test of verification by experiment long enough to entitle it to be called a Law. In the course of ages this principle has in Europe been simplified down to the sin-

gle proposition that sexual intercourse outside the monogamous marriage is morally objectionable. The extreme simplicity of this "hypothesis" gives it an additional claim to careful consideration.

The New Psychology makes it necessary to reconsider the hypothesis; but not necessarily to discard it. It must be critically examined.

Marriage and Divorce

The institution of marriage raises ethical questions which are social and economic as well as purely sexual. In particular, unless the community can (as Plato thought desirable) devise some better way of producing and rearing children, it must claim to regulate conditions of marriage—not, however, forgetting that, unless the working of an institution normally benefits the individual, it will not in the long run conduce to the welfare of the race. Considerations bearing on this:

(1) Natural Selection has eliminated races in which the parental instinct is not strong. Since marriage seems the best way of satisfying this instinct, it is likely to conduce to happiness. In spite of the economic burden involved (which educational reform might lessen) a small family is likely to be less happy than one of moderate size.

(2) The fact that society guarantees to the woman that her husband support her and her children, lays on the wife certain (varying) economic obligations, as well as the unvarying obligation of guaranteeing to him that the children are also his.

The ethics of Jealousy. The rule of fidelity in marriage is of social concern, and has roots in a funda-

mental human instinct which it would be scientifically unsound for any code of ethics to ignore.

The higher freedom of woman depends largely upon the existence of an accepted code "which excludes her from being a sexual object for men other than her husband."

(3) For economic and other reasons, marriage must not be at the mercy of every change of feeling. A "second wind" in marriage.

The highest spiritual possibilities of marriage cannot be realised in a union entered into in the expectation that it will not be lasting.

Normally, then, it would seem that the life-long obligation of marriage is in the interests of the individual. Since, however, in practice this often results in grave hardship, we must consider under what conditions Divorce should be allowed.

It is an error to suppose that any definite ruling on this question is to be found in the words of Christ. Also, since the membership of Church and State is not identical, there is no necessity that the rules which these enforce upon their respective members should be identical.

The problem is to find some way of meeting "hard cases" without impairing the sense of the security and sanctity of marriage in the general mind. Its solution will probably demand a certain amount of experimentation. A practical suggestion in regard to this.

The Romantic and the Physical

Prevention is better than cure, and it is of more importance to save people from making unhappy marriages than to facilitate divorce. Much may be accom-

plished by dispelling certain false, but widely current, ideas.

(1) Those who expect the impossible are bound to be disappointed. There is a natural psychological propensity to seek, and to imagine one has found, a perfect ideal in some person of the opposite sex. The inevitable disappointment with any actual partner is enhanced beyond measure by the "romantic tradition" in literature, and to-day especially by the cinema. But romance is not all illusion.

By way of remedy much may be done by promoting relations between the sexes which will make it possible for young men and women to get adequate knowledge of one another's real tastes and character before marriage. What is wanted is to foster relations of comradeship rather than of romance; to secure this should be the main object of the new etiquette which must take the place of that now being discarded.

(2) The Manicheean notion that the instinct of sex is in itself evil must be emphatically repudiated. In particular it must be recognised that a healthy woman, no less than a man, ought to feel its urge. Nevertheless, the psychology of the male and female are not in this respect identical. Frigidity as a cause of unhappiness in marriage.

Purity and Sublimation

The revolt of the modern woman against sentimentalism. Purity is essentially a mental virtue; it is bodily also because acts of the body inevitably affect the mind. It consists in being primarily interested in the beautiful and the wholesome, not in ignorance of the existence of their opposites or of the way to fight them.

Prudery, and the distinction between "repression" and self-control. Self-control necessary for sublimation; this is "not abolishing sexual activity, but lifting it into forms of which our best judgement may approve."

Brief discussion of the problem of sexual abstinence in cases where marriage is impossible or unduly delayed.

"Free love" does not in fact lead to happiness.

Prostitution

Sexual irregularity often begins with, and is still oftener excused by, the idea that it constitutes an "adventure." This is due to two causes.

(1) Unwise treatment of children when they ask questions touching on sex.

(2) The presentation of sex-morality, not as a comprehensible ideal, but as a set of mere prohibitions. It is characteristic of adolescence to revolt against prohibition but to glory in ideals.

Some remarks on the prostitute, the "amateur" and "trial trips."

Ideal and Practice

Mr. Havelock Ellis and others, while in no way desiring to abolish marriage, hold that society should recognise as legitimate other forms of sexual union. This would in practice necessitate a set of rules and understandings—in fact, a new code.

But what is really wanted is not a new code, but a new vision. This will give their full value both to the physical and to the romantic aspects of sex, but will recognise that, if either of these is allowed permanently to usurp the first place, it will detract from the

highest spiritual attainment in marriage itself, and in friendship outside the marriage bond.

Marriage enables the woman to satisfy the urge to creation, by the bearing and bringing up of children. The man must seek this satisfaction elsewhere, normally in his work. In regard to this, the wife may be invaluable as a "helpmeet," but not as an "inspiration" in the romantic sense of that word.

A rule which admits exceptions is of little value on account of the hallucinatory power of sex. Cupid is much more than merely blind. A certain amount of renunciation for the sake of principle is necessary for moral development; this fact makes the existence of a rigid rule in regard to sex normally a good thing for the individual.

But renunciation inspired merely by fear of consequences has no moral value. The penalty visited upon sexual offences by public opinion in the Victorian age was too severe. Christ condemned sexual lapses, but showed leniency towards offenders. His disciples were to carry on His work, not by judging men, but by being the "salt of the earth."

There are cases so hard that the cost to the individual of renunciation may seem too great to be demanded. Yet the only "salt" of the earth is the willingness of individuals to make sacrifices which really cost for the sake of principle. An act of voluntary sacrifice may in its moral effects be made spiritually one with the self-offering of Christ.

It is far better to face suffering in this spirit than to be overtaken by it in the disillusionment to which the "primrose path of dalliance" always leads.

MORAL ADVENTURE

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Part I

IN SEARCH OF A MORALITY

Slave Morality

Darwin, without intending it, undid the work of Constantine. With results that are partly good and partly evil, he made the rejection of doctrines of the Church more fashionable than their acceptance. But for fifteen hundred years Europe was haunted by the flames of Hell and the vision of the *Dies Irae*—the fearful picture of Judgement derived, immediately from Jewish Apocalyptic, ultimately perhaps from Zoroaster. Nevertheless, the gates of Hell could not prevail entirely against the call to adventure which rings out in the words and acts of Christ. The cathedral builders, the knight-errant, St. Francis, soared far above that ethic of "safety first" which is the logical corollary of a religion based on fear. Almost, but never quite, has the Church taught a "slave morality."

At the Renaissance the reign of terror seemed about to end. Liberated from its prison-house, the spirit of man burst out on a career of experiment. In science and in art that experiment was gloriously fertile and grandly constructive—for it was conscious of its aims. But so far as morality was concerned, the experiment took the form of a purely negative revolt. The Renaissance was by no means, what it is often described as being, a revival of paganism. Morally the Renaissance was not pagan, it was merely purposeless. The majority of the great writers of Greece and Rome are deeply concerned with moral issues, though of course their moral outlook is very different from that of Christ. If Horace bids us snatch the passing hour mistrustful of the morrow, that is in protest against the high seriousness of a society which seemed to him to need that lesson. Quite other was the typically Renaissance attitude; the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini—which so profound a student of the period as J. A. Symonds selects as the book which quintessentially reflects its spirit—reads like the work of one who, like Adam before he ate the fruit, is simply without knowledge of the difference between good and evil. The pagan

poet can mourn *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor;* Cellini seems unaware of a distinction between good and bad in the specifically moral sense. On the side of morals, the Renaissance was adventure without insight and without aim—therefore on that side it failed.

That is why the moral revival, which—since man cannot live by bread, or even by art, alone—necessarily followed, was bound to take the form, less of fresh experiment than of conservative reaction. Protestantism, it is true, was an experiment in the moral sphere. By transferring the parade-ground of the soul from the cloister to the hearth, and by seeing the opportunity of serving God less in the sanctuary than in the countinghouse and the civic council room, it opened up the possibility of a complete reassessment of the moral values of the Middle Ages. But such a revaluation was to a very small extent the conscious intention of the Reformers; participation in these activities was justified *theoretically* on account of their value, not in themselves, but as a means of spiritual discipline. In its conscious aims the Protestant Reformation, quite as much as the Jesuit Counter-Reformation within the Latin Church, was a moral reaction, from the "world-affirm-

ing" Renaissance back to the "world-denying" Middle Age. It was Luther who said "The world's an ill fellow, let's hope God will soon end him."

The idea that a Christian ethic might be not "world-denying" but "world-transforming" had not yet been clearly formulated; indeed, we sometimes forget that not until this twentieth century has it been at all widespread. And this is not surprising; excessive fear saps the spirit of adventure, and the Churches of the Reformation, no less than the mediaeval and the post-Reformation Latin Church, based the ultimate sanction of conduct on the supernatural torture chamber. Looking back on his Protestant boyhood, Cardinal Manning expresses his thankfulness that at least he had been taught this:

> "The lake that burneth with fire and brimstone," never even faded in my memory. They were vivid and powerful truths; and motives which forwarded and governed me. I owe to them more than will ever be known till the Last Day.[1]

To-day that cloud has lifted. Scientific discovery, historical criticism and a subtle change —for the better I would suggest—in the mental outlook of the race have made the mediaeval idea of Hell appear to the majority as both

[1] E. S. Purcell, *Life of Cardinal Manning*, i. p. 18.

ridiculous and immoral.[1] No one, of course, who has thought seriously about a future life can for a moment suppose that in the next world, if there be such, it is all one whether this life has been basely or nobly lived. One main ground for belief in a life beyond death is that immortality is a postulate of a moral universe; and in a moral universe it cannot be always all the same for the just and for the unjust; the distinction between right and wrong choice would be unreal if its consequences were not in some sense eternal.

Theologians may be found who will maintain that, if this be admitted, we have affirmed all that is essential in the doctrine of Hell. They err. Religion and ethics are concerned with quality; it follows that in any assertion about religion or ethics it is the imaginative

[1] St. Paul, the moral adventurer *par excellence* of the early Church, shared its belief in an impending Judgement—that was an inheritance from Jewish Apocalyptic. But the goodness of the "good news" he preached consisted precisely in the contention that a man who had once turned to Christ in faith need no longer *fear* that Judgement. Few, if any, of the passages in the New Testament which are quoted as implying the doctrine of eternal punishment are really intended to convey that meaning. [See the essay, "The Bible and Hell", by C. W. Emmet in *Immortality*, ed. B. H. Streeter.] There is an extremely suggestive discussion of the attitude of Christ Himself to this cycle of ideas in *The Lord of Thought*, Dougall and Emmet (Student Christian Movement, and Macmillan Co., New York, 1925).

element which, since it conditions its emotional content, conditions thereby the amount and kind of truth which it conveys. Therefore the doctrine that right choice is something that has eternal consequences is *not* the same as that of hell-fire; words mean what they are felt to mean, and doctrines are only identical if they evoke an identical reaction in the minds of those who hear them. The doctrine of the eternal significance of right choice is one which, if realised at all, can only inspire to a high seriousness. The traditional doctrine of Hell is one which must either cow or incite to mockery—and neither of these reactions produces a state of mind likely to be morally creative.

I am not saying that in moral training there is no place at all for fear. Where the consequences of actions are likely to be terrible, it is well that men should know the truth. Men do need continually reminding that the Reign of Law—that inevitable nexus of cause and consequence which holds throughout physical nature—holds also in the sphere of conduct. Every word and every action of mine sets in motion a chain of consequences—for good or evil—which extends far beyond my individual ken. Every deed—every thought, even, that is harboured for more than an instant in my mind—

effects a subtle change within my personality. The kind of things I do and think make me the kind of man I am. And the kind of man I am determines the friends and enemies I make, the opportunities I see or miss, the things which I succeed or fail in. For better and for worse, "character is destiny." No one who has watched the actual working out of the Reign of Law in individual character or in the external consequences of actions in social life—regenerating or devastating as the case may be—can miss the glory or the tragedy which follows the right or wrong in moral choice.[1] And, since the mere fact of dying will not change a bad man to a good, we must suppose that, if personality survives the grave at all, it must survive enriched or injured by the experience of this life. The eternal consequence of moral choice is a truth the preacher does well to inculcate; but Hell is a mythological conception of so gross a character that to preach it to-day is actually to distract attention from the

[1] Right choice depends quite as much on knowing what one ought to do as on the will to do it. That is why in the Bible "wisdom" is regarded as an essential of morality. The individual conscience is an unsafe guide unless it has been educated, not only by right living but also by reflection on moral issues. Conscience is not a "labour-saving" device to exempt us from the trouble of thinking.

really vital truth to which in a barbaric age it did give crude expression.

The preaching of hell-fire has for some time fallen out of fashion. Ministers of religion for the most part realise, more or less explicitly, that, if not actually immoral, it is at least ineffective. It is less widely recognised that a morality, which for centuries in pulpit exhortation has been based in the last resort on fear, must find some other basis or pass away. For one generation or two, the inertia of custom may keep the majority more or less in the old ways. But in the modern world, for better or worse, mere tradition has lost its old prestige. The morality of a people can no longer rest on what its intellectuals are teaching it to call "taboos"; it must be founded upon principle—and that clear and comprehensible.

Nietzsche and Havelock Ellis

The last half-century has been a period in some ways resembling that of the Renaissance —not least in being an epoch of moral revolt. But there are already signs that of a morality based on mere revolt humanity now, as then, will quickly tire. There is, however, this difference between the leaders of thought at the Renaissance and those of the age we live in—the present age is *interested in morals*.

Nietzsche, for example, the literary gonfalonier of revolt, is above all concerned with moral reconstruction. He throws down—but it is in the hope of building up.

I see something fearful ahead—chaos in the first instance, everything fluid. Nothing that has value in itself, nothing that commands, "Thou ought'st." It is a condition of things not to be borne; to the spectacle of this destruction we must oppose creation; to these wandering aims we must oppose one aim—create it. . . . On this account an aim is now more needed than ever and love, a new love.[1]

The last thing Nietzsche is content to say is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"; life to him is futile without purpose clearly realised and without definite ideal. The same holds good of Mr. Havelock Ellis. Like Nietzsche, he takes it for granted that "God is dead," and seeks on the basis of that assumption to build a new ethic from the standpoint of aesthetics.

Life must always be a great adventure, with risks on every hand; a clear-sighted eye, a many-sided sympathy, a fine daring, an endless patience, are ever necessary to all good living. With such qualities alone may the artist in life reach success.[2]

[1] I owe this quotation to W. M. Salter, *Nietzsche the Thinker*, p. 203.

[2] Havelock Ellis, *The Dance of Life*, p. 263 (Constable, 1923).

Of these two ventures in ethical reconstruction that of Mr. Havelock Ellis seems to me to be the more valuable, because the more essentially positive. In his philosophy ethics is in effect subsumed under aesthetics, and thus morality is conceived as the Dance of Life. Mr. Ellis claims that his outlook is essentially one with that of the Greeks, which was first consciously revived in modern Europe by the great Lord Shaftesbury in the eighteenth century. The new and distinctive feature, however, of Mr. Ellis's own view is his insistence that an art of life is impossible except on a basis of science. Here again in principle he is right. The aesthetic perfection of the architect's design for a dome will not save it from crashing to destruction if he has insufficient knowledge of his materials and of the strains and stresses which they can support. Just so, the art of living must be based on an exact and thorough knowledge of human psychology. Mr. Ellis himself has given life-long study to the psychology of sex; and his ethical conception of the "Dance of Life" is a structure largely reared on that foundation.

Dancing and building are the two primary and essential arts. The art of dancing stands at the source of all the arts that express themselves first in the human

person. The art of building, or architecture, is the beginning of all the arts that lie outside the person; and in the end they unite. Music, acting, poetry proceed in the one mighty stream; sculpture, painting, all the arts of design, in the other. There is no primary art outside these two arts, for their origin is far earlier than man himself; and dancing came first. . . . Dancing is the primitive expression alike of religion and love—of religion from the earliest human times we know of, and of love from a period long anterior to the coming of man.[1]

But, I would query, has not Mr. Ellis, in seeking an art to which to liken ethics, chosen the wrong one? Of his two primary arts should he not have selected as the type, not dancing but building? "The art of building," he says, "is the beginning of all the arts that lie *outside the person*"; surely ethics is primarily concerned with my relations to a world outside myself. This is so, not only because other persons than myself exist and have rights to be considered, but even in relation to my own self-development. Any psychologist will tell you that mental health depends on a gradual turning outwards of the *libido;* this in the infant is directed inwards, but unless, by easy stages, it is trained in an outward direction, the neurosis called "Narcissism" results. Again,

[1] Havelock Ellis, *The Dance of Life,* p. 33 f.

dancing is for the moment's thrill; building is for lasting use. Ethics is the science of the *structure* of society; in a good ethic, as in good architecture, the structural and the decorative will be intimately blended, and each will subserve the purpose of the other; but of the two it is structure that is fundamental.

Dancing, as Mr. Ellis goes on to show, is of all the arts the one most closely and deeply rooted in sexual emotion. But here again, if the biological function of this emotion be considered, it is found to be the continuance of the race, that is, a kind of building. The "ecstatic sexual dance of birds," which he speaks of, is merely *preparatory* to the creative task of nest-building and rearing the young. One of the greatest problems of humanity is to see that sexual emotion finds expression in forms which are creative and not disintegrating in the social system. Man's sexual energy is only partially used up in the propagation of the species; civilisation is largely a product—in a sense a by-product—of this residue of energy sublimated in the form of art, whether building or dancing, in the large sense in which Mr. Ellis defines these so as to include all the other arts. Art is not merely a safety-valve for letting off what might be dangerous energy; it is creative of

high spiritual value. Nevertheless, Art is the handmaid of Life, not Life of Art.

The traditional subdivision of human idealisms into the pursuit of the Good, the Beautiful and the True, is a more penetrating analysis of human mentality than one which would identify the beautiful and the good; and—since this tripartite analysis is implied in Plato—the Greeks cannot be quoted in the contrary sense merely because the word καλόν means ambiguously either beautiful or good. We, too, can use words like "fine" or "fair" of actions as well as looks. The Greeks, like ourselves, were quite aware of the difference between righteousness and beauty; they differed from the average Anglo-Saxon in the relative importance they attached to these two forms of good. Any attempt to eliminate the moral by making it identical with the aesthetic is unscientific. The distinctions "good and bad," "beautiful and ugly," are the expression of two different reactions of the human mind, both of which belong to its original make-up. Indeed, since natural selection has been busy for some hundreds of thousands of years in eliminating all tribes in which herd-loyalty was defective, there is on biological grounds some presumption that the "moral sense" is more deeply rooted than the

aesthetic, for obviously it has more "survival value."

Ethics, then, is not merely the Art of living, nor even the Science of living. It is these; but it is also something more. We must affirm this; but all the more for this must we welcome Mr. Ellis's insistence on two points. First, conduct is an art and, therefore, like any other art, is not to be mastered without severe self-training based on a clear appreciation of its aims and its technique. Secondly, it is a science, and must therefore be based on a study, painfully and disinterestedly undertaken, of the actual facts and conditions of human life. To that important section of the field of fact which is comprehended under the title the Psychology of Sex, Mr. Ellis has himself made contributions of great scientific importance. Those who, like myself, think that his theory of ethics is lop-sided—owing to an undue emphasis on sex, and a relative neglect of the facts which the economist, the sociologist or the jurist study —will endeavour to restore the balance, but will not decry either the method or the man.

But if we are to call ethics a science, an important issue is at once raised. Science, it has been shown in the previous essays, is averse to certainties. It is ever questioning what was

said "to them of old"; it lives by adventure. If, then, morality is to be scientific, must it not do the same? I maintain that it must. It must question the results of the past; and it must make experiments. But if I say this, I must at once add the qualification that moral experiment must be experiment in the sense in which the scientist, not in that in which the pornographic novelist, uses the word.

Nietzsche has influenced opinion in England and America much less than on the Continent. I recall an explanation of this given me in Berlin some twenty years ago by a German friend: "Nietzsche was required here; in England and America the individual has always had his chance; with us he has been subordinated to the State. It was time that his claims should be asserted—even if extravagantly." I connect this with an observation made to me some years later by a Prussian theologian, "The first and last duty impressed by the Church in Germany was Romans xiii. 1: 'Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers . . . the powers that be are ordained of God, therefore he that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance of God.'" The freedom in which Luther was interested was not political; and perhaps, as my friend suggested, Christianity in that tradi-

tion had been taught in a way that made necessary the anti-Christianity of Nietzsche—as a stage.

Destruction, however, is at best only a preliminary stage to reconstruction. It is by construction that we live, let alone make progress. Construction was Nietzsche's aim; and for all that he professed himself to be the supreme prophet of "anti-Christianity," deep down below the surface of his philosophy there is a certain kinship with that of Christ.

> By my love and hope I conjure thee, throw not away the hero in thy soul! Keep holy thy highest hope.
>
> If ye had more belief in life ye would yield yourselves less to the moment. But ye have not enough substance in you to wait, not even to idle.[1]
>
> The opposite of the heroic ideal is the ideal of all-round development—and a beautiful opposite and one very desirable, but only an ideal for men good from the bottom up.[2]

To this aspect of Nietzsche I shall have occasion to return later on. For the moment, however, I am only concerned to insist that, with all his greatness, Nietzsche's contribution

[1] *Thus spake Zarathustra,* Eng. tr. pp. 55, 58 (Unwin, 1899).

[2] His own example of this kind of good man is Goethe. From a private letter, quoted by W. M. Salter, *op. cit.* p. 512.

to ethics in the modern world has been mainly negative; and this, I hold, is due to the fact that the conception of the Will to Power, which he made fundamental to his system of ethical reconstruction, is one full of sound and fury, but actually purely negative. For Power is a conception *empty of content* apart from the purpose which directs its use. Power means capacity to attain an end which is desired. But if my end is merely more power—well, I may as well ask the first turkey-cock I see to exchange souls. The passion for power as such (apart from interests in the ends it is to serve) is a recognised form of neurosis. It is normally an "over-compensation"—the reverse of the medal so to speak—for an "inferiority complex." It is therefore a symptom of weakness, not of strength. There is reason to distrust a philosophy of life which has a neurotic symptom built into its foundations.

The Ethics of Christ

If asked what precisely is the distinctive feature in the ethics of Christ, I should be inclined to answer, "The fact that it is not ethics at all." Moses has a law; Confucius has a system; the Stoics have a philosophy. Christ, instead of a code, gives an ideal; instead of rules, a life;

instead of a philosophy, an art. By this I do not merely mean that the embodiment of His teaching in life and example is that which gives it its power; I mean that in His actual teaching Christ speaks as if He conceived conduct as "the art of life"—an art of solid building, yet with something of the dancer's gaiety. There is a kind of aesthetic quality about His approach to moral questions; one is always left with the feeling that His teaching is, as it were, "beyond morality." The word "morality" suggests rules, system, law, theoretical principle; but in the teaching of Christ there is always a sense of creation and adventure, a suggestion of buoyancy, paradox, *abandon.* For example, that conflict of duties which arises whenever the claims of family and those of some larger group seem incompatible, is one of the difficult ethical problems which have to be solved differently by each individual in each particular case. But Christ does not suggest a scientific approach to it. He flings down the paradox, "He that hateth not his father or his mother cannot be my disciple." In the same spirit He cries, "Love your enemies," "Turn the other cheek."

The gesture of extravagance in sayings like these logically results from an essentially novel conception of God. Christ, if I may venture so

to put it, takes God seriously, but not solemnly. To Him God is not the potter, autocrat of the clay He moulds. From a living God there comes forth life, and life means liberty; the creator of personality is the begetter of the free. To Christ, God is not the supernatural law-giver, the grave administrator of the Eternal Justice; He is like the father of the Prodigal Son, or the shepherd in the tale of the Lost Sheep, for joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance; He is One who sends His rain on the just and on the unjust; therefore men who would become God's children must imitate His generosity.

We can imagine a worldly man listening to Christ as the master of a strange new art worth learning. And it seems so easy; he does not strive or cry over it; he is not a professor. He is himself a man of the world and something more, the man of another world, one who has not even refused the kingdom of this world but has transcended it, turning from jewels to flowers like a child.[1]

To St. Francis of Assisi is due the rediscovery of the historic Jesus—or, rather, its first and most important step. He bade his followers be *joculatores Domini,* the Lord's merry-

[1] A. Clutton-Brock, *Studies in Christianity,* p. 82 (Constable, 1918).

men, and to make religion more an adventure in the world than a meditation in the cloister. The sense of spiritual adventure thus reawakened soon bore fruit in apparently alien departments of the mental life of man. The next generation saw the rebirth in Europe of Science and Art. Was it an accident that Cimabue and Giotto painted in Assisi, and that Roger Bacon, the inventor of the method of experiment in science, was a Franciscan friar? In our own times historical criticism has, so to speak, brought down the Christ from the stained-glass window into the market-place. It may be that this will be the prelude to another spiritual rediscovery of the historic Jesus, not less fruitful than that of the thirteenth century—but that awaits the translation of the scholar's vision into adventurous thought and act.

The aesthetic, non-legalistic quality in the ethical teaching of Christ is all-important when the question is raised of the validity of His teaching for other ages than His own. If Christ had legislated, inevitably any legislation that was suitable for life in Palestine in the first century A.D. would have been obsolete in fifty years. Mahomet did legislate; and, for his own people in his own age, he legislated well—and just because his laws were so well

adapted to his own time they are obsolete to-day. Again, if Christ had propounded a philosophic theory of ethical principle, as the Stoics did, His teaching would undoubtedly have been one of the milestones in human progress, but would it have been much more? But it is the quality of great art to be eternal. Pheidias and Shakespeare do not go out of date. And just because the life and teaching of Christ have this quality of great art they can be an inspiration for all time.

But if the teaching of Christ, in so far as it has an aesthetic aspect, is on one side in contact with Mr. Havelock Ellis's conception of the Dance of Life, on another side it has an austerity, a warrior quality, which is more akin to Nietzsche. To appreciate the ethics of Christ, we must turn our backs on the sentimental picture of a "Galilean Idyll" and all that kind of thing. Whatever of romance is to be here found lies in the high adventure which seeks to work out a romantic ideal in the spirit of stark realism; it is the romance that dares to face reality. The core of Christ's teaching is that the gate is strait.

It is, perhaps, worth while to consider side by side Nietzsche's "Live dangerously," and the word of Christ, "If any man would be my

disciple let him take up his cross and follow me." This saying of Christ is not, as is commonly supposed, an exhortation to asceticism; it is a summons to adventure. If it was actually spoken by our Lord, its primary reference could not have been to His own crucifixion; a reference to an event which had not yet happened would have conveyed little meaning to the disciples. But in those days crucifixion was the normal method of execution, and the death penalty was awarded lightly and for offences comparatively slight; hence the spectacle of a condemned man carrying the cross along the road to the place of execution was one of everyday occurrence. The equivalent, in modern language, to this famous saying of our Lord would, it has been happily suggested, be something like this: "If you think to be my disciple, remember it means living with a halter round your neck." The disciple of Christ is one who has the courage to break new ground; he must dare to differ and dare to die. He has embarked upon an adventure, and needs must "live dangerously."

But there is contrast, as well as contact, between Christ and Nietzsche in their view of the dangerous life. Nietzsche's conception of adventure, like his conception of power, is

empty of content. "Ye say a good cause will hallow even war? I say unto you: a good war halloweth every cause." It is a fine phrase; but a phrase cannot justify a cause—not even aesthetically; a skeleton is the more hideous in an embroidered shroud.

Content is given to a summons to adventure by giving it direction. Mr. Havelock Ellis does this by taking beauty as the goal; the end of the adventure is to make of life a poem or a dance. Christ does this by making its inspiring motive the love of God and Man. Adventure becomes, then, a hunger and thirst after righteousness—social and individual. And this gives it a still richer content; for a noble deed or noble life has aesthetic beauty—but also something more. Nietzsche in quite another way tries to give aim, and therefore content, to the dangerous life. To him it is the vision of "beyond-man," the race of supermen whose begetting we may further, that alone gives purpose to this present life.

> God hath died. Now *we* wish beyond-man to live.
>
> The most careful ask to-day: "How is man preserved?" But Zarathustra asketh . . . "How is man *surpassed*?" Beyond-man is my care . . . O my brethren, what I can love in man, is that he is a transition and a destruction.[1]

[1] *Zarathustra*, Eng. tr. p. 428.

Nietzsche points man onward and upward—to "beyond-man." Christ does the same—to the Kingdom of God. Christ's conception is the richer in content.

Nietzsche and Havelock Ellis stand on opposite sides of the mountain range which divides mankind into the Stoic and the Epicurean breeds. Nietzsche is on the Stoic side; Havelock Ellis stands near the water-shed, but in the last resort he has the mind of Epicurus. On his side of the mountain the descent to the plain is steep; and a long way down the slope the *intelligentzia* of to-day is camping. And daily it drinks from the brook of Disillusionment which has its spring hard by.

It is Epicurus now from whose breath the world grows grey. His gospel, in its noble even more than in its ignoble form, is but a desperate effort to hold at arm's length the conviction, All is vanity. "All is not vanity"; it says, "with health and luck, with wise and careful cultivation of the mind and passions, you may achieve a modest happiness punctuated with a supreme moment here and there." It is a sad and rather dingy creed. Considered as a dance, life is an entertainment which does not come off. Other people do the steps all wrong;

the band is out of tune; the material conditions which make the dancing-floor are seldom smooth, and our toes get sore.

Think of life, not as a dance, but as a battle, and wounds and weariness are what we should expect. They hurt, but do not dishearten. They may exhaust, but will not embitter. High-brow and low-brow, we can all fall in together. We are off on the great adventure—which some call the service of Man, others the Kingdom of God—to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

But—God hath died? . . . That happened yesterday. Let us await the third day. To-morrow it may be He will rise again.

Part II

CODE AND EXPERIMENT

What is Morality

Society is a system of persons co-operating with one another, whether at work or at play, in all the complications of political, economic and social life. Co-operation is impossible if you have no idea of what the other man will do. There must exist a set of rules and understandings which prescribe to the individual certain *customary and expected types of behaviour* appropriate to different types of circumstance. The sum total of generally accepted rules and understandings it will be convenient to speak of as "the Code," using that term to include not only law but the "unwritten law" prevalent for the time being in any society. The more certainly men can count on one another to observe the Code, the easier does co-operation become. In some cases the type of behaviour is prescribed and enforced by law, in others by an ethical or religious tradition, in yet others by social etiquette. These distinctions are for

many purposes important; but they do not affect the fact that in all cases the behaviour is *prescribed,* and that co-operation is made possible by treating the persons concerned *as if they had entered into a contract* to behave in the way prescribed.

The "sanctity of contract" is in commerce and finance recognised as the indispensable precondition of all dealings above the level of the operations of the street hawker. In most social relations the contract is more often implied than expressed, but its sanctity is no less the precondition of any kind of social co-operation.

The small boy who declines to take any further part in a game of cricket after he has had his turn at batting arouses a kind of fury in the breasts of his young companions. He has embarked upon a joint enterprise, he has enjoyed the part of that enterprise which is most interesting to himself, and he has enjoyed that part solely because others have co-operated with him in the expectation that he would co-operate with them in a similar way. To refuse to do so is to disturb the very basis of society and to make cricket impossible.[1]

The motives which prompt obedience to the Code vary with individuals, and with the same individual at different times. It is expected of a hostess that she exhibit a gracious demeanour

[1] H. J. Paton, *The Good Will,* p. 285 (Longmans, 1927).

to a guest, even to one whom she may happen to dislike. She may be moved so to act by the desire to carry into practice the maxim "Love your enemies," by the hope of an invitation to some select social function, or merely by the habit of conformity to the usage of polite society. Again, it is customary in this country for parents to put their children to school; some do so form enlightened affection, some because their social position demands it, others from fear of the law. But society is enabled to "carry on" only because, whatever their motive, the majority of people do as a general rule obey the Code.

For Morality motive is fundamental. Morality may be regarded as the spirit of which the Code is the embodiment. But the morality which the Code embodies is that of the average, not of the most advanced, members of society; and even by the average member the Code is recognised as a static, mechanical and inadequate expression of his sense of right. Morality, therefore, tends to interpret the Code not in the letter but in the spirit; it is aware that, since the Sabbath was made for man, it is lawful to do good even at the expense of breaking the letter of the rule. Morality sees in the Code, not an ideal of conduct, but

merely that approximation to the ideal which it is practicable for the time being to enforce; it is therefore ready on occasion to give more than is in the bond, "good measure, running over." Morality "plays the game" in the sense of regarding its rules, not as restrictions to be if possible "got round," but as being, like the canons of an art, the expression of principles designed to make the game from the sporting standpoint—a standpoint half-aesthetic, half-ethical—a "good" game. But one who is really keen on a game will desire, not only to play it, but to improve it, if by a change of rules this can be done. Morality, therefore, must for ever seek to amend the Code.

Now the particular Code—in the large sense of an accepted customary mode of behaviour, whether prescribed by law, ethical tradition or etiquette—current in any society is *the organising principle* of that society. Society is not a mob; it is not just a collection of individuals who happen at a given moment to be together in the street. It consists of persons whose very existence depends on the fact that there is a certain *stability* in the relations which they have with other persons—of children, for example, who are there because parents provide a home, of parents who provide a home because they

have permanent employers, of employers who can employ because they have a trade connection. And this connection in its turn only exists because of an elaborate organisation of currency, post office, railway, steamship, etc.; which again depends upon their being a stable government at home and a variety of treaties and trade agreements with other similarly organised states, and so on and so forth. Of this infinitely elaborate scheme of relationships —political, social, economic—the organising principle is the established system of institutions, law and social custom.

On the existence of this system depends the possibility of any kind of considered and constructive action. What, for example, would be the use of my writing this essay if I could not depend upon the postman, the letter-sorter, the railway staff, the printer, the publisher, the bookseller, doing their part? And without the co-operation of innumerable other persons, each doing his particular piece of work, it would not be possible for any of these to do his part —much less to be provided with the food, clothing, housing, etc., which is a preliminary condition of any one doing anything at all.

Civilisation, however, has not developed "according to plan." The state, the municipal-

ity, the factory, the shop, the school, the family, and the elaborate system of law and custom by which each of these is enabled to function, have grown slowly and painfully. There has been an experiment here, an accident there; or perhaps geographical situation, military failure or success, a mechanical invention, the ideas of prophet or reformer have created a need, suggested an opportunity, or provided the stimulus, for some *ad hoc* modification of certain features in an earlier organisation. Inevitably a social machine so developed works in a cumbrous and purblind fashion; it would be remarkable if it did *not* in endless ways result in inconvenience, injustice, unhappiness and waste—spiritual as well as material. And today dislocation and discontent is possible on so grand a scale that the very existence of civilisation is threatened by war and the class-war.

This is a situation which must tax to the uttermost the moral and intellectual qualities of the race. And its difficulty is immensely enhanced by the lack of a clear sense of moral direction, due to the vanishing prestige, with the people in general as well as with intellectuals, of a morality based on religious sanctions in which the majority have ceased to believe. Great civilisations have perished before

now; unless ours can find either a new morality or a new intellectual basis for some old morality, it will decline and fall like Babylon and Rome.

Morality, we have seen, seeks to "play the game"—in the sense of carrying out a recognised obligation in the spirit as well as in the letter—and also, where possible, to "improve the game." In morality, therefore, as distinct from law, there is always a germ of the adventurous; it is concerned not merely to preserve, but to create, good. But the first stage in morality is, not to reform the world, but to do one's duty. The world, it is an old saying, would be an immensely better place to live in if only a few more people would do amiably and thoroughly the work they are paid to do. Duty is often boring, usually fatiguing, sometimes exacting to the point of heroism. At that point its quality as adventure becomes obvious to all; "England expects that every man this day will do his duty" is in our tongue the classical expression of the call to heroic adventure.

But what is my duty? In certain circumstances—to the soldier on parade, for example—the answer is simple, To do as I am told. Of every one's duty some part consists in the faithful carrying out of instructions given, or

regulations laid down, by legitimate authority. But a part of every one's duty is the periodic overhauling of his interests and activities as a whole, with a view to ascertaining what improvement is feasible in regard to the aims towards which they are directed or to the methods of reaching these. The duty of finding out exactly what one's duty is, is of all duties the one most generally neglected. Any one who tries to fulfil it is sure to discover, among other things, that he or she has been neglecting some opportunity of helping to "improve the game."

You, my dear sir, have at least a tongue. Have you reflected that the all-powerful force known as Public Opinion is simply "what everybody is saying," and that for this purpose "everybody" means a number of people exactly like yourself? Why not then talk—but first think out and be at pains to be informed—about matters of high importance, other than cricket and the Derby? Your conversation will not become less interesting; and perhaps at the next election, municipal or parliamentary, some of your friends will prefer your guidance to that of the *Weekly Wangler,* when they are deciding how to cast their vote.

And you, madam,—so I am informed—also

possess a tongue and are not un-practised in the using of it; you have a vote, too, now. And if you will face up to the futility of, and pluck up courage simply to leave undone, two-thirds of what heretofore you have taken it for granted are your "social duties," you will find the time for some of the many kinds of that unpaid work which, because socially creative, is a *real duty*. Incidentally this will effect a reduction in your dress-bill. Give half what you so save to *The League of Nations Union*. The League may not be able to prevent another war; but, with proper backing, it has a sporting chance. Or, if that fail to excite you, find some better cause that will.

Experiment and Adventure

So complicated is the existing political, social and economic organisation of society, and so inadequate, morally and intellectually, to the tasks which must be faced are the mass of men, that many despair of the possibility of substantial improvement—either in this organisation or in that complex of unwritten law and custom on which it rests. Others believe passionately in the possibility of amelioration, and, what is more to the point, for the sake of such a cause are prepared to make great sacrifices. But

amelioration can be brought about, not by the abolition of organisation or codes of conduct, but by the production of an organisation or code better than those which now exist. The introduction of a new system may involve a certain amount of destruction of the old. "You cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs"; but unless you have a pan ready to put them in, you will merely make a mess on the floor. In the sphere of political organisation and large-scale industrial production it is generally accepted that advance is more likely through adaptation, than through destruction, of the organisation which exists. Quite certainly this holds in regard to that intricate system of individual relationships which depends upon the general acceptance of a traditional code of ethics. In morals, even more than in science, experiment must be made on the basis of a provisional acceptance, combined with free criticism, of an existing hypothesis.

To speak of an accepted Code as an "hypothesis" is in no way fanciful. In science, hypothesis is a principle of organisation. Science is "organised knowledge"; and the purpose of a scientific hypothesis is to effect, in some particular field of investigation, an improvement in the existing organisation of knowledge.

That is, it is an attempt to achieve an intellectual organisation which is superior to that already existing, either because it covers facts not previously observed or because it explains familiar facts in a way that is simpler, and therefore intellectually more satisfactory. The main difference between a scientific hypothesis and a social custom or law is that, while the one is a principle of organisation designed for the purpose of knowing, the other is designed for the purpose of acting.

The analogy between the hypothesis and the Code is one that extends to the conception of experiment as applied to one field or the other.

(1) In science the experiments by which knowledge is advanced are devised by persons who are masters of the knowledge of the subject which exists already; the experiment of an ignoramus is more likely to blow up the laboratory than to further research. So in the sphere of legislation or ethics a successful experiment is not likely to be made by a person who has been at no pains to master the details of the subject sufficiently to enable him to recognise the value, as well as the inadequacy, of that which the past has achieved. And he will waste much effort, and possibly bring about notable disaster, unless he has learnt the lesson which

can be derived from the unsuccessful experiments of previous workers.

(2) In science no serious investigator contrives experiments to test an hypothesis unless it appears to his mind (and that, be it observed, is the mind of an expert) that the prospect of its turning out to be correct is such as to make worth while the cost, and also (if there be such) the risk, which the experiment involves. Now in the sphere of conduct all experiment is costly; for conduct affects persons, and the consequences of action, upon the character of the doer and upon the welfare of the sufferer, are irrevocable and often disastrous. And whereas a broken test-tube does not matter, a broken life does. This last consideration, however, is one that cuts both ways. When the number of broken lives which an existing system produces is large, provided there is reasonable probability for expecting success, an experiment ought to be made, even if the risk involved is great.

(3) In science an experiment is an act performed in the hope that its result will be to advance truth. In the sphere of law or ethics no act is in any analogous sense an experiment unless it is performed in the hope that it will advance righteousness. An act which contravenes the law or the accepted moral code of the

community has no claim whatever to be styled "a moral experiment" unless it is done with a clear intention and a reasonable expectation of producing an effect which is morally valuable.

A man who offends against a law or usage because he is convinced that it is the cause of serious and widespread evil and an obstacle to human progress, is making a moral experiment. The man who does this either because it suits his personal convenience, or merely because he "sees no harm in it," is doing the equivalent of playing tricks in the laboratory. He is doing no good himself; but he is wasting time and material, and is creating an atmosphere of insecurity which hampers the work of those who are trying to make real experiments.

Merely to do our duty, provided we are careful to make sure that it is our real duty, is a moral adventure—sometimes a highly dangerous one. But in a more restricted sense the term "moral adventure" may be applied to the making of experiments in regard to the institutions, laws and accepted usages of society with a view to their amelioration, or to behaviour towards individual persons which goes beyond what is demanded by the Code. We have seen that any such adventure must start

off by recognising the value, and the tacitly contractual character, of the Code which is the principle of organisation in any society. But while recognising this contractual basis, that is to say, the primacy of justice, it always aims at something which is beyond justice. The spirit of moral adventure is a righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees—for that was purely contractual. It was based on a contractual view of the relation of man to God, and therefore also of man to his fellow-men.

Since persons are always persons and never merely things, a contractual relation between them is certain to be unsatisfactory if this fact is ignored, and it is supposed that nothing is required but a mechanical equivalence between give and take. The giving and the demanding should be accompanied by that consideration for the self-respect of the other party which is the essence of true courtesy. The relative importance of this element in any social relation is not the same in all cases. An officer in charge of the coolies engaged in coaling a liner ought not to address them as if they were dogs; but neither are they entitled to ask that he shall accost them like a Sovereign welcoming the ambassador of a friendly Power. "A shilling,

a stick and a smile will take you anywhere," said Baden-Powell; and the wise man knows that not the least potent of these is the smile. But if, because persons are persons, the fulfilment of the engagements explicit or implicit in every relationship between them involves more than a merely mechanical equilibrium of service and demand, the smile not only is but ought to be as necessary as the shilling and the stick. Consideration and courtesy are not merely the oil of the wheels of personal relationship; they are creative. The bricks of the social edifice are justice and honesty, but generosity and sympathy are the mortar which keeps them in place.

In science the object of experiment is primarily theoretical, that is, it aims at the organisation of knowledge; in morality the object of experiment is practical. It has in view, either the immediate benefit of particular persons, or some general improvement in the organisation of everyday life which will require a change in an institution, a law or a social custom.

When the thing that requires to be changed is embodied in some written law, or in some institution resting on a legal sanction, there are two ways in which the experimenter can proceed. He can either commit an overt breach

of the law, or he can endeavour to secure an alteration in it. Which of the two courses is morally the more constructive will depend upon circumstances. For an early Christian, summoned by the magistrate to offer sacrifice in accordance with the law, the adoption of a policy of temporary conformity, pending an agitation for repeal of the law, would have been the declining of moral adventure. A British citizen, sincerely convinced that the incidence of a particular tax is unfair, would by refusing to pay it be making an immoral experiment—immoral, because the existence for a time of minor injustices is a small evil compared with conduct likely to impair that general respect for law as such without which society would dissolve into anarchy.

When what is needed is the reform of some social custom which has no legal sanction, the first step will still, as a rule, be to endeavour to persuade people that the custom is wrong. But custom differs from law in that it can never be actually changed until some one has the courage to contravene it. The custom, for example, of avenging an insult by a duel was first of all undermined by the gradual spread of the views of people who thought it was wrong; but it could never have come to an end in this

country unless certain individuals on certain definite occasions had taken the definite step of declining to give or to accept a challenge.

The moral value of an act which contravenes the Code obviously depends entirely on its being an overt act. Secret defiance of a bad law or custom can never be a moral adventure, since it contributes nothing towards its abolition or amendment. Indeed, it is an *immoral* adventure, since its actual effect is to retard improvement. A person who, while secretly defying an existing law or custom, conforms to it in public, is lending it the weight of his apparent approval; he is thus hindering reform to the full extent of any personal influence he may happen to have. Moreover, he is claiming for himself a liberty which in effect he is refusing to others. To describe the conduct of a man who in a prohibitionist state votes "dry" but privately drinks alcohol, the words "moral adventure" are inappropriate.

To "live dangerously" is good; but on one condition—that we realise that life is neither a game nor a skirmish but a campaign. Not my own pleasure, nor even my own existence, is at stake. On success or failure depend supreme values, affecting not self alone but family, country, humanity. The need of the

age is the spirit of adventure, but not the kind of adventure that puts money on a horse or exceeds the speed-limit in a crowded thoroughfare—of that we have already too much. What is wanted is the spirit of *moral* adventure—and this gives meaning and definition to the words, "Live dangerously," by adding, as a controlling maxim, "Live constructively."

Part III

THE ETHICS OF SEX

Difficulty of the Investigation

In regard to politics, economics or education the scope of this essay does not permit of discussion in detail of the practical application of principles. From the point of view, then, of abstract moral theory, there would seem to be no grounds for doing so in the special case of sex. The general principles of moral obligation, and, therefore, the true conception of moral adventure, can hardly be radically different when applied to this particular department of ethics. Nevertheless there are grave reasons for making an exception of the Ethics of Sex—selecting for discussion some only of the more urgent problems.

The manners and morals [writes Mr. H. G. Wells], the laws and arrangements between the sexes to-day, the expectations people have and the rights they claim in love and marriage constitute now a vast, dangerous, unhappy conflict and confusion. It has ceased to follow a code or a system. It is like a panic, like a débâcle.

In the past there has been stress, suppression and sorrow in sexual life, but never so chancy, unjust and wasteful a time as this one. It is a state of affairs in which no one is safe for happiness, and no conduct sure of success. . . . The contemporary love-story begins in illusions and goes on by way of misunderstandings to conflict. It opens cheaply and ends in dispute or dull resignation.[1]

The difficulties of the subject are so great that I frankly admit I should willingly have passed it over, had not that been, in effect, to decline an adventure which the title of this essay seemed to impose upon its writer.

First of all there is the difficulty of judging how far the conclusions which *any one* reaches on this particular subject are really determined, less by the process of strictly scientific and philosophical reasoning, than by antecedent prejudice—due to some personal experience or to the atmosphere in which he was brought up. To me, for example, it seems probable that the views of some of the distinguished writers from whose conclusions I differ are not unaffected by a mood of acute reaction against some particular type of tradition in home, school, or church; they are in fact rebels, and "rebel-psychology" is an imperfect equipment for that cool, objective and realistic consideration of the

[1] H. G. Wells, *The World of William Clissold*, p. 768 f.

facts, without which any theory of ethics will be a construction of sentiment rather than of science. But what I recognise in others I must suspect to exist in myself. If they are prejudiced, so probably am I; and, on this subject, so is everybody else. What is called in astronomy "the personal equation of the observer" is a source of error which necessitates a large, but here unfortunately not exactly measurable, amount of correction of all observations which are concerned with sex. All that any one can do is to endeavour, before reaching his final conclusions, to allow a reasonable margin for such correction in his own case.

A second difficulty arises from the vast range of the considerations—ethical, psychological, sociological and economic—which are not merely relevant but vital to the discussion. So far, however, as it affects the *method* of our enquiry, this difficulty shrinks to much smaller dimensions if we recall the principle of scientific investigation to which attention has been directed in a previous essay. In science, exploration always takes its start from some accepted hypothesis; it begins by a re-examination of an existing belief. Clearly, then, any investigation into the ethics of sex must start off with an examination of the commonly accepted princi-

ples of sexual morality. It must study the "taboos," if you prefer that description, which are actually in possession of the field.

Sex and Taboo

The word "taboo" is one not entirely inappropriate to describe the mental attitude towards these principles of the average man or woman. To suppose, however, that for this reason the principles to which the taboo attaches are not worthy of serious examination is to allow oneself to be hoodwinked by a mere word. The question which the biologist or sociologist—and still more the psychologist—will want to ask is, Why have these particular taboos been able to maintain themselves so long?

Taboos do not enjoy the unique privilege of being exempted from the operation of Natural Selection. The sex instinct is so powerful, the institutions and observances connected with it affect so profoundly the organisation, and indeed the very existence, of any society, that among taboos which touch on sex (whatever their origin) the law of "the survival of the fittest" is certain to come into operation. This process may not eliminate taboos, like the superstition against walking under a ladder,

which prohibit the doing of what no one specially desires to do. But a taboo which aspires to ride the storms of sex must have something more than that behind it. Sex taboos, even though futile or noxious, can flourish in "protected areas," in a Pacific island or a remote African tribe, where all custom is immemorial and criticism has never waked. But since the dawn of philosophy in Ionia five-and-twenty centuries ago, Europe has been the stew-pot of the world's thought. Greek, Roman and Goth, Jew, Christian and Gnostic, have poured into it their traditions and their questionings; and since the Renaissance the pot has been again aboil. Where the matter concerned is one about which every human being must keenly feel, only a super-taboo could survive. The notion that sexual morality is nothing more than taboo, belongs to the same order of thought as Rousseau's idea that the golden age would dawn again for man when "the last king had been strangled by the bowels of the last priest." We have since learnt that kings and priests came into existence because they performed functions necessary to society. Taboos are like kings, in that they can be superseded only by the discovery of some wiser and better way of doing the work they do.

A taboo survives when experience, of the rule of thumb kind, shows that defiance of the restrictions which it imposes works out badly in the long run. It is probable that most taboos have their origin in some experience. Suppose, for example, that in two successive years a man is struck by lightning on a certain hill, it is not unreasonable for the savage to infer that some deity has his seat there and that the place must not be approached, or only after the offering of a special sacrifice. And if some one, after offering such a sacrifice, ascends it and is not killed, the original hypothesis is (by what Mill calls the Joint Method of Agreement and Difference!) so far verified. Where an experiment is likely to be fatal, and where there is nothing obvious to be gained by it, the savage does not make those further experiments which would decide whether in this particular case the observed sequence of events was a mere coincidence or whether these really stood in the relation of cause and effect.

But in Europe, at any rate, no one can deny that, in the last thousand years or so, all taboos connected with sex—whether they had their origin in empiric observation or not—have as a matter of practice, if not of theory, been

subjected to plenty of experimentation by innumerable adventurous individuals. Those taboos which have survived have done so because they embody, no doubt in a rough and ready way, the summed experience of the race. The principles to which they are attached are the analogue, in the sphere of practice, of a scientific hypothesis which has so far stood the test of verification by experiment that it is deemed worthy to be styled a law.

There is another respect in which they resemble a scientific hypothesis. They have, in the light of experience and criticism, undergone considerable modification, in the course of which they have tended more and more to the ideal of simplicity which science desiderates. And simplicity is no less a recommendation in a rule which forms the organising principle of a particular sphere of social conduct than in an hypothesis which is the organising principle of a particular field of knowledge. The sexual taboos of Central Africa are numerous and complicated; those of Great Britain have, in effect, been reduced to one—the belief (translated into practice more strictly by women than by men) that sexual intercourse is morally objectionable except in a lifelong monogamous marriage between persons outside a table of

kindred and affinity prescribed (with some minor variations) by the Church or by the State. The extreme simplicity of this "hypothesis" is alone sufficient to commend it, at least provisionally, to the favourable consideration of a mind trained in scientific method.

But, it will be said, does not the New Psychology compel us to revise all working hypotheses in regard to sex in the light of fresh knowledge? The New Psychology undoubtedly demands that we should reconsider current views; but that does not necessarily mean to revolutionise them. It is easy to forget that, just as men talked prose before they ever heard of grammar, so they thought and acted psychologically before that science was born. Institutions and ideals are objectifications of the psychological needs, as well as of the economic or military necessities, of the race. And if we turn to myths—which the New Psychology has taught us to study scientifically as symbolic reflections of a people's soul—what do we find? The ideal which shines through Andromache's farewell to Hector was not the creation of "Christian asceticism," nor was India's best-loved legend—the tale of Rama and Sita. What Christianity has done is, in effect, to make a serious attempt to achieve, by discipline in

common life, what Greece and India were content to dream of.

I am not suggesting that we are called upon to accept as final, either in theory or in practice, the attitude towards sex which has been characteristic of traditional Christianity. On the contrary, even if this had in practice worked out far better than has been the case, the spirit of science would still demand that any working hypothesis should submit to re-examination. What does follow, however, from the considerations so far advanced is that the institution of the monogamous marriage, hedged about by an objection to sexual intercourse outside marriage, is clearly indicated as the point from which investigation and, if necessary, experiment, if it is to be truly scientific, must begin by testing an existing belief; and although in regard to sex relations there is more than one existing belief, there is no rival "hypothesis" which has survived the test of practical experiment under such varying conditions over so large a field.

Marriage and Divorce

Discussion of the ethics of sex necessarily centres round the institution of marriage. But the ethical problems which arise in connection

with it are by no means all of a sexual character. Economic issues are involved, and essential to its purpose are "the procreation of children" and the "mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity." Accordingly, no theory of marriage can be sound which looks upon it as an institution predominantly concerned with sex—whether in its physical aspect or from the standpoint of romantic love.

No community can survive at all which is not so organised as to provide on a large scale conditions which secure the bringing into existence of children, and their subsequent nurture in an environment reasonably favourable to a healthy growth, psychological and moral as well as physical. And unless it gives serious attention to a steady improvement in these conditions, no community is likely to progress. The mechanism by which heretofore society has secured these conditions has been the institution of marriage—an institution which, in the law and social customs of different races and different epochs, has assumed an extraordinary variety of forms.

Thinkers as far removed from one another

in time and temperament as Plato and Karl Marx have, though for different reasons, agreed in holding that the interests of the community would be better served by the abolition of the institution of the family and the substitution of some different type of organisation. No part of the system of either of these philosophers has been so universally repudiated, alike by the sentiment and the common sense of the ordinary man and woman and by the considered judgement of sociologists. Nevertheless, however clear it may be that the abolition of the institution of the family would be socially disintegrating and morally disastrous, I venture to affirm that in their approach to this problem both Plato and Marx were beginning at the right end. For obviously, until and unless a community has evolved an organisation for perpetuating its existence superior to the institution of marriage, it has a right to demand of its members that, if need be, they submit to a considerable sacrifice of individual convenience rather than imperil the stability and normal working of that institution. If the State in time of war may ask the individual to give his life to preserve it from defeat, it may reasonably in time of peace ask for a lesser

sacrifice for what in the long run might mean its preservation from extinction.[1]

Accordingly no change in law or social custom can properly be called a "moral experiment" which is likely to result in a reduction of the quality, or (within certain limits) of the number, of the citizens of the next generation. And it is generally agreed that, from the

[1] Clearly, unless the average family in any class or nation *exceeds* two, that stock is dying out. If on the average there are only two children to a marriage, they do not replace their two parents; for of all the children born, many die before marriage, many do not marry, many have no children or only one. Under modern conditions, for one reason or another, the number of persons who have more than two children is steadily diminishing, especially among the educated classes; unless, then, something is done to encourage members of these classes to have families very greatly in excess of two, these stocks will die out. This is a matter, not of opinion, but of arithmetic.

A strong case can be made out for teaching the wives of drunken husbands in the slums methods of restricting the size of family; to the better educated what now requires to be pointed out is rather the dereliction of duty involved by undue restriction. Over-population may for the moment be an economic difficulty; but the example of France shows the existence of tendencies in modern civilisation which, if not checked in time, must lead to its extinction. Over-population need not lead to war. In this country it is more likely to stimulate the development of new fields of enterprise or discoveries which make habitable lands hitherto all but unoccupied. Under-population, in wealthy countries, far more inevitably leads to war—for it invites attack. The declining birth-rate of France was one cause of the late war; a declining birth-rate was the main cause of the fall of the Roman Empire.

point of view of the children, a stable union between the parents is in normal cases infinitely the best. This stability, however, becomes a doubtful benefit where marriage has become for husband and wife a standing brawl; and there are obviously limits to the extent to which the rights of children can be pressed as against the happiness of the parents.

The community has no existence apart from the sum total of the individuals comprising it. No institution, therefore, can be really for the good of the community unless in its normal working it conduces to the well-being of the individual as well as to that of the race. If the institution of marriage be looked at from this aspect three points emerge.

(1) Natural Selection has seen to it that only those races have survived in which, for the majority of individuals, the parental instinct is one that is clamant of satisfaction. Marriage has survived because, along with a reasonable allowance to the claims of sex, it provides the richest possible satisfaction for the parental instinct. This instinct, so far as its *conscious realisation* is concerned, is much less urgent than that of sex; but biologically it is deeply rooted, and it is much less spasmodic in its operation. Indeed, it is probable that for most

people, though they are usually unaware of it, the psychological consequence of a lifelong thwarting of this instinct (unless it is carefully sublimated)[1] is a much greater degree of unhappiness than results from a (similarly unsublimated) thwarting of the sex instinct. It is the satisfaction of the parental instinct which makes worth while the loss of liberty entailed by marriage—which for the woman is very great, for the man far greater than feminist writers are usually willing to admit.

A large family—more particularly if the intervals between the children are unduly short—may grievously overtax a woman's strength; but it is at least arguable that the extreme modern reaction against this has proved to be the source of almost as much unhappiness, though in a different way. A young and healthy woman who, after a first or even second child, declines maternity is apt later on to be invaded by a subtle discontent—which easily infects the husband also. The man, too, though he often grumbles at a prospective increase of family, usually comes to feel after the event that a full home is one better worth working for; and

[1] Of course some professions, such as teaching and nursing, provide, automatically, as it were, a means of sublimating the parental instinct.

it is in human nature, within certain limits, to love better what costs one more. At any rate the happiest marriages, so far as my own observation goes, are those where there are from four to six children—spaced out over, perhaps, twice that number of years—even when this results in somewhat straitened circumstances.[1]

(2) Society guarantees to the woman that her husband support her and her children. In cases where the man has to work hard and make considerable sacrifices to this end, the reasonable claims he may make upon his wife are proportionately greater. A duke may not request his wife to cook his dinner; a navvy has the right to demand it. But *in all cases* there is implicit in the marriage bargain an obligation on the wife's part that it shall be *his* wife and *his* children that the man is called upon to support. Unless this is guaranteed to

[1] If this particular type of happiness is to remain a possibility for the educated classes, and if the community is not to be impoverished by the dying out of what are probably its soundest stocks, much more must be done to remove from the parents the economic burden of the higher education. No doubt from the point of view of a general preparation for life, to have plenty of brothers and sisters is in itself an education—but it is incomplete. And what England needs is the development in every town of a school which combines efficient teaching with the *esprit de corps* generated by the boarding-school system.

him, the marriage can in no sense be a satisfaction to *his* parental instincts; he will be also deprived of the strongest motive for working or saving for those whom he feels to be his "own flesh and blood." This is conceded, a little grudgingly, by Mrs. Bertrand Russell.

> But we are forced to the conclusion that a compact to have children may involve very nearly a life-long partnership, though not by any means strict marital fidelity. It does, however, quite clearly mean an honourable limitation of freedom on the woman's side, sufficient to ensure the certainty of descent. A few years of agreed sexual fidelity seems the simplest method. Those whom that irks . . .[2]

Most people, I should imagine, enter upon marriage in a spirit which makes fidelity to their true love seem, not an irksome restriction, but a loyalty in which to glory; and feel the contrary of well pleased with themselves if and when that situation is reversed. But I have quoted this passage as it raises in an acute form a moral issue which nowadays is much debated.

Jealousy is admittedly a "green-eyed monster"; is it not, then, a sign of moral elevation to have outgrown any objection to one's partner in marriage entering into sexual relations with any third party who happens for the

[2] Dora Russell, *The Right to be Happy*, p. 186 (Routledge, 1927).

moment to be attractive? Real love, it is argued, seeks the happiness of the other person, and to oppose obstacles to his or her inclinations in such a matter is to reassert a "possessive" theory of marriage now happily obsolescent.

But to argue in this way is to ignore the vital fact that the unwritten, as well as the written, law concerning marriage is a matter of general concern. If it can be shown that the rule of fidelity in marriage is one that conduces to the welfare of the great majority, no individual is justified in breaking it merely on the ground that his or her partner does not happen to object—or, being a person of "advanced" views, would be ashamed to express an objection. Publicly to break a rule which is in the general interest, is obviously an anti-social act; to do so privately is to enter upon a course of action necessarily furtive and underhand, and nothing is more demoralising than to find oneself committed to an indefinite series of concealments and evasions.

No doubt it is good to rise superior to jealousy; but it is also good to resist translating into act the stirrings of wandering fancy. At the level of animal instinct the desire for exclusive possession of a sexual partner and the

desire to run after a new attraction are exactly on a par—and both go back to our pre-human ancestors.[1] Civilisation demands the socialising and sublimation of animal instinct; where, as in this case, two instincts come at times into violent conflict, the civilising process is best accomplished by a compromise.

It is harder for the ordinary man or woman to overcome resentment at a partner's infidelity than to forgo errant sex relations. The rule of fidelity in marriage is a compromise between these opposing instincts which it requires no special heroism to make workable. It therefore satisfies the first desideratum of a scientific ethic, that it be based on fundamental needs of human nature and be a socialising of sub-human instincts.

Jealousy, when it discourages a partner in marriage from forming friendships with persons of the opposite sex, is the poison of married life. Again, readiness to forgive a partner's faults is a condition of a successful marriage; and in some cases the fault to be for-

[1] The notion that the objection has its origin in the patriarchal family, and the desire of the male to treat the female as property, is absurd. Some people write as if a jealous woman were an unheard-of phenomenon. Or perhaps when that occurs we must drag in as an explanation the still earlier matriarchal family!

given may be a sexual lapse. And unconsciously the sub-human instinct of jealousy predisposes people to judge such a lapse in their partners more harshly than moral failure in other matters equally important. But, quite apart from the feelings of the other partner, if infidelity in marriage is a breach of a socially valuable rule, it is to be condemned. And for either husband or wife to encourage the other in adultery for the sake of exercising a magnanimous superiority to jealousy, is like teaching the housemaid to steal in order to wean oneself from covetousness.

To the political philosopher it is an accepted truism that liberty is impossible except on the basis of general respect for law. There is an additional reason, psychological in character, why this principle should apply to marriage. The higher freedom of women—a freedom I mean which ensures that they are thought of and treated by men, not as a specialised (and, therefore, as a limited and inferior) sex, but as human persons—is only possible in a society where certain restrictions are taken for granted. The psychological reason for this is bluntly stated in an article in the current number (July 1927) of *The British Journal of Medical Psychology*.

. . . The inhibitions against the more extreme manifestations of sexuality are felt to be so efficient, that inhibitions affecting the more superficial relationships involved in social intercourse can be appreciably relaxed, with a resulting marked increase in social freedom. Thus it comes about that many a woman finds—somewhat to her astonishment—that not the least of the benefits of marriage consists in an easier and less impeded social relationship with other men. Being excluded as a sexual object for men other than her husband, she can be more readily looked upon as a fellow-member of society, the twin anti-social effects of sexual desire and sexual inhibitions no longer making themselves felt to the same extent as formerly.

(3) When two parties contract a marriage, steps are taken which cannot be retraced the moment there is a change of feeling on the part of either of them. If a man buys and furnishes a house for his bride, the contracts of sale are not revoked by the fact that six months later she falls in love with some one else. Again, a woman who consents to marry A has forgone the chance of marrying B; that chance does not necessarily recur if a year or two later her husband begins to find her conversation boring.

The mystics say that a period of flatness and staleness, "the dark night of the soul," regularly follows the supreme experience of exaltation and illumination; this may sometimes last

for years, but those who persevere to the end attain ultimately to a peace and happiness that endures and passeth understanding. It is often so with marriage. Enthusiasm and exaltation—at all levels of human experience—are inevitably followed by reaction. Love must be born again, and in a new shape, before marriage can realise its ideal. But many would never struggle through the time of blankness, if law and public opinion did not oblige them to go on. In marriage, as on the running track, the fixity of the course makes easier the effort to find one's "second wind."

A marriage entered upon as a lifelong bond, "for better for worse . . . till death us do part," cannot but—in its reaction on character, hopes and ideals—be something different in kind from a union of a temporary kind. The realisation of the highest ranges of spiritual and moral attainment in marriage would not for most people be possible if it were entered upon in the expectation of impermanence. A certain atmosphere of finality is the true spirit of marriage.

> Then trust me not at all, or all in all.

Marriage loses something of its essential quality unless its breakdown is regarded as something which, like the amputation of a limb, is

an irreparable disaster even if necessary to save life. It cannot make terms with the gentleman who was looking out for a State "where marriage certificates are issued with a divorce-coupon attached."

Normally, then, the interests both of society and of the individuals concerned are best subserved by making the marriage bond one of lifelong obligation. In the exceptional case, however, this obligation inflicts the gravest hardship—resulting at times, not only in unhappiness, but in spiritual degeneration. And at the present day—partly owing to causes which, as I shall show later, are largely remediable—the number of such cases is very large. That being so, we are led on to consider under what conditions society ought to permit divorce.

The idea that a definite ruling on this question is to be found in the words of Christ rests, I believe, on a misapprehension of His method and His meaning.[1] In regard to no other ques-

[1] As reported by Mark and Luke, our Lord's condemnation of divorce is absolute; Matthew records identical sayings, but with a qualifying exception in the case of fornication. The insertion of the qualification in Matthew may be explained by the desire to turn a proclamation of an ideal into an enforceable rule; its omission (if original) by Mark

tion does He make rules; He states ideals—usually in the form of paradox or parable which could not conceivably be treated as legislative enactments. Most emphatically Christ taught that monogamy is the ideal, and that a divorce is a moral calamity. Moses, He said, had sanctioned divorce on account of the hardness of men's hearts. But I see no reason for believing that He held that Moses *did wrong* in thus taking into account the facts of human nature. Moses was a legislator; and every legislator is bound to consider, not only what is ideal, but also the very different question what things it is wise or practicable to attempt to *enforce by law*—and in the days of Moses the indissolubility of marriage was not one of these. There has been moral progress since Moses; nevertheless, the modern legislator is confronted with the fact that in this particular respect the hearts of men (and women) have not left off being hard.

Another mistake is to suppose that the law of the Church and of the State in the matter of divorce must be identical. It is ideally de-

and Luke is less easy to account for. To take this view in no way involves the rejection of Archdeacon Charles's contention (cf. *The Teaching of the New Testament on Divorce*, pp. 85 ff.) that the story in Matt. xix. 3-12 is dependent on a source which on the whole is superior to Mark x. 2-12.

sirable that this be so, but it is not necessary. The preservation in the popular mind of the prestige of the monogamous marriage is a vital interest of the State; in that respect the marriage legislation of Church and State have an identical aim. It does not follow that these two bodies will agree as to the best method of attaining it. They are not legislating for exactly the same set of persons; and it is possible, though not, I think, very probable, that in this case the two sets of persons may require different sets of rules. The Church (in its legislative capacity in regard to its own members) is bound to consider—and from time to time should reconsider—how far it is wise to try and enforce particular rules; but it must claim the right to be its own Moses. In this matter neither Church nor State should attempt to dictate to the other.

The state of things at the present moment is such that much adventurous thinking, and probably some practical experiment, will be needed before the right remedy is discovered. But we have always to remember that no such experiment will be in its effect moral, unless it can somehow find a way to meet cases of exceptional hardship without any weakening of the hold on the popular mind of the principle

that marriage is essentially and ideally a life-long union. If exceptions to this principle are too lightly admitted, it will be hard for the average man and woman to retain that sense of security and sanctity in marriage which is a condition of their deriving from it the maximum of moral and spiritual benefit.

It is worth while, however, to insist that the problem here set to the reformer is one in no way peculiar to the institution of marriage; it arises in regard to every human law or institution. Society can only be held together by laws based on some general principle and designed to meet some general need; but there is no law, however salutary, which does not entail hardship in exceptional cases. When, however, such hardship is found to exist on a large scale, the wise legislator sets about to find out what modification of the law (if any) would alleviate the most conspicuous or most common cases of hardship. And he does this *for the sake of the objects which the law or institution itself is designed to secure;* for, though it is true that "hard cases make bad law," nevertheless, whenever the hard cases are sufficiently numerous or sufficiently hard, public opinion condemns the law. The institution or law itself then loses its prestige; for law maintains its

prestige only when what it enforces seems to the common mind to be both reasonable and right.

It is too much to expect that the right solution of so difficult a problem will be reached without a certain amount of experimentation. But an experiment is worthless unless there is some one to watch it; and if the watcher is merely the general public, some facts of vital importance are bound to escape notice. The practical suggestions, therefore, that I venture to put forward are two:

(1) Any new legislation touching marriage and divorce should be avowedly of a temporary character, expiring automatically after, say, ten years—saving, of course, all interests created under it.

(2) When such legislation is passed the enacting law should provide for the immediate appointment of commissioners with the duty of watching the experiment. Further, it should be made an obligation on all persons who avail themselves of the new law to report themselves from time to time to the commissioners and to answer questions. The inconvenience entailed by such obligation would be a small matter compared with the benefits they would hope to derive from the law. At the end of the ten years

the commissioners would be in a position to advise the Government of the day as to the advisability (or otherwise) of re-enacting the law, of doing so with considered amendments, or of prolonging the period of experiment. All future legislation on this matter of vital national importance would thus be so far as possible removed from the influence of uninformed prejudice or of temporary agitations and would be based on a strictly scientific study of fact. The method, I may add, is one that might profitably be tried in other specifically difficult fields of social reform.

The Romantic and the Physical

Sociologists are in the habit of insisting that in matters like unemployment and public health the most hopeful line of advance is to concentrate on experiments of which the aim is *prevention rather than cure*. It is my own belief that this holds good of marriage. Legislation, provided it is sufficiently wise, may do something to meet the case of persons who at this present moment are unhappily married. But it is far more important to consider whether it may not be possible to take steps towards the removal of the causes which most frequently lead to marriage becoming unhappy. To illus-

trate my meaning I will briefly say something about two of the most common.

(1) In every one of us there lives a mental image of, and a deep longing to find, the ideal person of the opposite sex. On the origin of this *imago* modern psychology has thrown much light. But as the number of ideal persons in existence is unfortunately not enough to go round, there is a psychological tendency to "project" upon any person who conforms to our ideal in certain ways—often purely fortuitous, such as tone of voice, colour of hair, or accident of gesture—all the totality of excellences by which our dream hero or heroine is distinguished. If we marry the individual upon whom this ideal has been projected, we are liable, through no fault of that person, to be grievously disappointed. A husband once said to me of his wife, "If only she would always be her true self, we should be so happy together." It was obvious to any outsider that the lady in question was all the time being her true self—and that, on the whole, a very admirable and amiable self. Those qualities which in her husband's eyes she was continually and perversely refusing to display, were qualities she had never possessed except in his imagination.

At the present day this inevitable psycho-

logical propensity is liable to excessive stimulation by the machinery which modern civilisation has devised for intensifying interest in the romantic aspect of sex—the novelette, the theatre, the cinema—an interest, of course, which is itself largely the creation of the psychological phenomenon already mentioned. I cannot forbear quoting a few sentences from the notable discussion of romanticism by Mr. H. G. Wells [1] —adding by way of comment on it, that much of what he says about women would apply also, with but little alteration, to men.

An increasing multitude of girls . . . is growing up to womanhood with no idea of any sort of worthwhile career except that of the heroine of a love-story with a powerful, patient, constantly excited and always devoted man. . . . The young man who sits beside the thrilling girl in the cinema theatre is already, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, a subordinated young man; he is always going to be rather preoccupied with the interest and difficulties of the work he has to do, and he is never going far away to execute wonderful deeds. Still less is he ever coming back with his hands full of gifts and his eyes full of crystalline desire. He is doomed, therefore, to be treated as a second-best thing by a young woman who would, if she were put to the equivalent test as a heroine, fail to prove herself even second-rate. He is going to be judged by false standards and treated upon false as-

[1] H. G. Wells, *op. cit.* pp. 774-787.

sumptions. . . . Humiliation awaits him, and for her wait the sorry reactions of a humiliated man. . . .

She must realise that though she can be violently attractive to a man she is only spasmodically attractive, and that on the whole her need for him is greater than his need for her. . . . It is the fundamental falsity of the romantic tradition that man should subordinate himself to the egotism of a woman. Let her not dream of it. It lures her on to the development of an enhanced exaggerated ego, pitifully painted, scented and adorned for worship. In that she sinks her actual personality.

Yet romance is not all illusion. The instinct to idealise the beloved is like other natural instincts in that, if guided by reason and reflection, it becomes creative. We see the good in those we love; but the fact that we are there to see it is often what brings it into being. Often a man's wife not only seems, but actually *is,* better to him than to the rest of the world. And when good is there, even if it has been elicited by our own faith in it, it inspires us too to see it and to worship it—for the vision of goodness is the revelation of the divine.

The best prophylactic against false romanticism is a set of social conventions which make it as easy as possible for men and women to find out *before marriage* whether they are really suited. Until recently the conditions,

more especially in the better-educated sections of the community, under which young people of different sexes were enabled to make one another's acquaintance, were so restricted, and often, as in the ball-room, of such an artificial character, that it was rarely possible to gain the knowledge of each other's character and tastes so essential to a sound judgement as to the propable success of a lifelong partnership. Indeed, twenty years ago most marriages were entered into by persons who had only met under circumstances likely to produce an actually misleading impression of their real selves.

Recent changes in social custom and convention have done much to remedy this. The increase in opportunities for real and rational comradeship between persons of opposite sex is a thing so desirable that it is worth while to make experiments for its sake even if accompanied by considerable risk. But in this, as in other departments of life, the mere removal of unnecessary or unreasonable restrictions, though a preliminary condition of advance, will not in itself secure it. It may indeed have the opposite effect, unless old conventions are replaced by new. It is no more possible to do without some definite recognised "code" in the relation of the sexes than it is in the relation between

guest and host. There must, among other things, be a clear understanding as to limits of intimacy which persons of good breeding are expected as a matter of course to observe. What these should be I do not venture to lay down. The unwritten laws which are to prevail in these matters should, and I think will, be gradually evolved by the general assent of persons under thirty years of age. But I would commend to the consideration of those who set the fashion for the younger generation two principles:

First, the line of advance is the promotion of comradeship and co-operation between the sexes; hence the securing of conditions favourable to relationships of this kind should be the primary aim of the new conventions. Nature will see to it that the other side of sexual relationship is not unduly thrust into the background. Secondly, it is mainly in the interests of the weak that rules are necessary. Hence in this—more perhaps than in any other department of life—it is the duty of the stronger brother and sister to assist the weaker by themselves submitting to restrictions which they see the weaker could not do without. Where the acceptance of a particular restriction is recog-

nised as socially constructive, it becomes, not a weak abnegation of personal liberty, but a creative moral act.

(2) No constructive discussion of the ethics of sex is possible which does not start off by unreservedly repudiating the notion that there is something inherently evil in the sexual instinct itself. To begin with, it is essentially un-Christian. That is to say, it is wholly foreign to the traditional Jewish attitude expressed in the Old Testament and implied in the teaching of Christ. The idea that matter—and, therefore, the body and all connected with it—is evil, is one that began shortly before the Christian era to invade the Roman Empire from the East. Even in the New Testament it is possible to find a text or two in which its influence may be suspected. In its extreme expressions, by the Gnostic and the Manichee, the Church fought hard against this tendency; nevertheless, the belief that the instinct of sex is somehow in itself evil percolated into Catholic Christianity. The Reformation was a step towards the repudiation of this idea; and it is much to the credit of the Jesuits that they endeavoured to temper some of its worst manifestations within the Latin Church.

The time has come for a repudiation more complete and more emphatic. The body and its instincts are in themselves good—though capable of infinite perversion in the direction of evil. Men and women should be no more ashamed of the instinct of sex than of the instinct of hunger. The education and control of both instincts requires to be taken seriously; the misuse of either brings disease and degradation. Yet the right use of hunger leads to physical health; and the right use of sex is a main condition of the highest moral and spiritual development. But there is an important difference between them. Hunger must find daily satisfaction, and that at the purely physical level. The sex instinct must to a certain extent, and may to almost any extent, express itself through "sublimation"—that is, through the diversion of energy into creative work, or towards that aspiration after the ideal which finds its satisfaction in Art and in Religion. For persons in the flower of life to be either incapable of sexual feeling, or incapable of controlling it, is equally a sign that they are physically, or (more often) psychologically, unhealthy. The woman who prides herself on complete absence of sex feeling is not a saint, but an invalid; and no less an invalid is the man

who mistakes uncontrolled impulse for exceptional virility.[1]

If women [writes Mrs. Bertrand Russell] really desire an individual life, freedom and a part in the cultural development of the race, they must not only fight for the right to do any man's work of which they are mentally and physically capable, they must also be more honest and frank about their instinctive nature and its functions. . . . Why all this feminine delicacy? . . . In sex life I believe that women who were free and honest would find that they did not differ very greatly from men.[2]

Mr. Havelock Ellis would, I imagine, wish to amend the last sentence of the above quotation. Women, he would say, do differ from men, but the difference lies in the fact that a kind of miniature courtship by the male is normally a psychological condition antecedent to the complete arousal of desire. For this reason he believes that for the wife's sake, even

[1] I have come across cases—and believe them to be common—where resort to a prostitute has been a *substitute* for solitary sex-indulgence, when, as often happens, this had become a "compulsive habit" virtually beyond the voluntary control of the will. Such a habit is now recognised as neurotic in origin; and it can usually be cured by psycho-therapeutic methods. In any case it is less objectionable on moral grounds than the practice of satisfying a personal craving at the cost of that degradation of a fellow-creature which is what prostitution involves.

[2] Dora Russell, *op. cit.* pp. 163, 165.

more than for his own, a recognition by the husband of "the play-function of sex" is important.

Nothing is so full of play as love.

It is true that women whose instincts are not perverted at the roots do not desire to be cold. Far from it. But to dispel that coldness the right atmosphere is needed, and the insight and skill of the right man. In the erotic sphere a woman asks nothing better of a man than to be lifted above her coldness, to the higher plane where there is reciprocal interest and mutual joy in the act of love. Therein her silent demand is one with Nature's.[1]

The theory that woman *ought not* consciously to feel the impulsions of the sex instinct—impressed upon the individual from the earliest years, enshrined in romantic literature and embodied in conventions of social usage—is potent to induce in many women an actual "frigidity" which translates the theory into fact. And on this rock not a few marriages go shipwreck.

Enormous numbers of middle-class and working women apparently still despise their husbands as people of an inferior animal nature, whose desires a woman may condone in loving-kindness but can never share.[2]

It is not good for a man to be treated by his wife, with however kindly intent, as an

[1] *Little Essays of Love and Virtue,* pp. 112, 132 (Black, 1922).

[2] Dora Russell, *op. cit.* p. 161.

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inferior animal—and the better the wife, the worse the result. It is sound psychology—as well as good Christianity—that, if you wish to improve people, you must treat them as if they were better than they are. It is in human nature to act in the way that is expected of one. Hence, to treat any one as worse than he is, is the way to make him worse. There is a further consideration. In the male, the sense of self-respect is, for biological and psychological reasons, closely associated with the idea of sexual virility. If, then, a man finds that, just because he is a *man,* he is regarded as an animal, his instinctive reaction is to feel, "Well, if she thinks I'm an animal, I'll show her I can be a real brute." Affection for his wife, and the restraints of civilisation, may prevent the expression of such a thought in word or deed. But it is not good for a man to be made even to think like that very often. It is less surprising than might at first appear that the husbands of "holy" women sometimes take to drink.[1]

[1] A medical friend, after reading the above in proof, made this comment: "For the man to regard the woman, or for the woman to regard herself, as a merely passive instrument of his desire, is a radically false conception. Frigidity in the female is either something artificially induced or a natural defect—in either case disastrous to the happiness of both. I think this side needs fuller insistence than you give it."

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Purity and Sublimation

Purity is a virtue of which the appeal is largely aesthetic. That is one reason why women more frequently than men have prided themselves on its possession. It is perhaps the reason why many men, who set very little store by it in the male, are yet ready to worship it in the female—often in a highly sentimental way. Besides this, there is the instinctive feeling, which biologically is probably well grounded, that, woman being potentially a mother, it misbeseems her to treat the source of life with levity.

The typical young woman of to-day is in a state of acute revolt against anything like sentimentalism in this matter. She does not want to be "an angel-watered lily." I am glad of that. Nor do I think the Lady to whom the poet first applied these words would have been well pleased by such a description of herself.

Purity in any rational sense of the word is primarily a virtue of the mind—of the body also, because any act of the body, more especially in this regard, reacts upon the mind. But no mental virtue can be based on ignorance. The essence of clean-mindedness—and this is as much a virtue in the male as in the female—

is to be primarily interested in what is beautiful and wholesome. But a person who has no knowledge of the ugly and unwholesome is ill-equipped for fighting them, and the modern woman feels that it is part of her business to fight them. The modern young woman has her faults; but her grandfather errs if he thinks that this is one of them.

The Puritan has had a bad time of it in recent literature; he is everybody's cock-shy. So much so that occasionally I fall a-wondering whether the parts may not have become reversed, so that it can now be said, not of him but of his critics, that they

> Compound for sins they are inclined to
> By damning those they have no mind to.

At any rate I shall forbear to follow the fashion of throwing stones at the prude. Prudery is the vice which parodies, and thus often renders nugatory, the virtues of the Puritan. In reality it is less a vice than a disease. It a by-product of what psychologists call "repression," that is, of an *unconscious* crushing down (usually dating from childhood) of the sexual instinct. And the cure for repression is not self-indulgence—as possessors of a third-hand knowledge of psychology sometimes think—

but self-knowledge. Self-control, the strong hand keeping a rein on clearly recognised desires, is a thing totally different from repression. It is a necessary condition, not merely of the moral life in general, but also of any really satisfactory sexual life.

> The element of athletic asceticism [says Mr. Havelock Ellis] which is a part of all virility, and is found even—indeed often in a high degree—among savages, has its main moral justification as one aid to sublimation. Throughout life sublimation acts by transforming some part at all events of the creative sexual energy from its elementary animal manifestations into more highly individual and social manifestations, or at all events into finer forms of sexual activity, forms that seem to us more beautiful and satisfy us more widely. Purity, we thus come to see, is, in one aspect, the action of sublimation, not abolishing sexual activity, but lifting it into forms of which our best judgment may approve.[1]

We must go on to ask, Can the sex instinct be so completely sublimated that the individual will sustain no harm if circumstances unduly delay marriage, or render it impossible? The answer to this question will not be quite the same for everybody. The amount of strain involved varies very greatly with the indi-

[1] Havelock Ellis, *Little Essays of Love and Virtue*, p. 51 (Black, 1922).

vidual—for some it is negligible, for others very considerable. It should be noted also that it may be either increased or lightened by conditions easily controllable like diet and exercise. But on the general question I will again quote Mr. Havelock Ellis, largely because he states that he bases his conclusion on continental medical opinion, which is prepared to go much further than English or American in the direction of admitting that abstinence has bad results; and I wish to run no risk of underestimating these.

> The old notion that any strict attempt to adhere to sexual abstinence is beset by terrible risks, insanity and so forth, has no foundation, at all events where we are concerned with reasonably sound and healthy people. But it is a very serious error to suppose that the effort to achieve complete and prolonged sexual abstinence is without any bad results at all, physical or psychic. . . . The fight [between different schools of medical opinion] is only concerned with the nature and degree of the bad effects which, in Näcke's belief—and he was doubtless right—are never of a gravely serious character.[1]

Assuming this opinion to be medically sound, what follows? Simply, as so often in real life, that we are forced to make a choice between two evils. When this happens, the wise man

[1] Havelock Ellis, *op. cit.* p. 58 f.

or woman chooses the lesser. Few people decide to give up their job and "go on the dole" because sitting all day long in a stuffy office is deleterious to health. Few people resolve never to open a book or read a newspaper again because the human eye was never meant for, and is always injured by, such kind of work. Some of us decline to cut down our daily allowance of cigarettes even when the doctor refuses to guarantee the bad effects as "never of a gravely serious character." An aged Head of a College in the last century, so it is fabled, once imparted to a junior Fellow the secret of long life in the rather trying Oxford climate: "Never work after dinner—and always dine early." I feel quite certain he was right; but I do not myself propose to purchase longevity that way.

For some, abstinence means a dreary struggle—often needlessly severe from lack of careful thought or good advice on diet, exercise or ways of sublimation.[1] The majority, I am sure, once they make up their mind to face up to it, do not find it hard to carry through—especially where the practicable alternatives, as usually happens, are sordid. The problem of

[1] There are some useful hints on sublimation in *Psychology and Morals*, by J. A. Hadfield (Methuen, 1923).

cases that are specially hard I shall return to later.

"Free love" is not the road to happiness. There is no basis—either in scientific psychology or in practical experience—for the notion that earth will become heaven once all the old taboos are brushed away. The experiment, or something very like it, has been tried, and on a fairly large scale too—in Imperial Rome, in Restoration England, under the later Monarchy in France—and in some circles at the present day. Where is the evidence that the result was happiness? Even the enthusiasm of Mrs. Bertrand Russell consents to the admission:

> There would be passionate griefs, disappointments and broken ideals, but none of this is so damaging to human personality as atrophy.[1]

Atrophy, I grant, is worse than unhappiness —of some kinds. But happiness is the object which this particular experiment is designed to achieve; if it fails there, it is discredited. There may be other ways of averting atrophy.

Prostitution

It is seldom the sheer force of physical desire that impels a young man to have relations

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 155.

with a prostitute *on the first occasion.* Far more often it is the idea that he is embarking on a gallant adventure. Once tasted, the fruit may seem sweet and a repetition of the experience be sought from mere desire. And that desire, being one that grows by what it feeds on, may ultimately become a morbid craving, against which he fights in vain. But it began as "an adventure."

A friend of mine, during the war, was persuaded by a fellow-officer to accompany him to the sign of the "Red Lamp." Immediately on entering he felt depressed by the tawdry sordidness of the place; but when he looked at the row of girls awaiting his selection, including one who seemed only about fourteen years of age, the whole thing struck him as so pathetic that he turned to go. "Don't run away, old man," said his companion, "be a sportsman!"

Looked at by the cold light of reason, it seems hard to account for the convention that something of the nature of a sporting adventure was being here declined. It is not enough to say that the sex instinct can throw a golden glow on very dismal deeds, just as a sunset can bathe a slum in momentary splendour. This power of sex is immeasurably enhanced by two causes, both remediable, which tend to an in-

tensification and perversion, psychologically quite explicable, of the natural instinct.

First, exploration of the unknown always appeals to the sense of adventure. This kind of glamour is to a fatal extent lent to all matters concerning sex by the quite unnecessary mystery with which it is commonly surrounded in the education of the young. Children ask questions about everything—among other things about their own bodies or about the provenance of the new baby. If they are put off with lies, or are answered in a way that suggests that the matter is a darksome and unclean mystery, their curiosity is at one and the same time both over-stimulated and, in the psychological sense, "repressed." The seed is sown of an emotional attitude towards sex and everything connected with it which is necessarily furtive, morbid and also over-curious. This often results in an emotional tension which enormously enhances the difficulty of physical self-control. At adolescence, it frequently gives rise to an intense desire to penetrate the mystery, which will make the mere acquirement of sexual experience the most alluring and fascinating of adventures.

Secondly, Nature has decided that adolescence should be psychologically a time of exper-

iment and revolt. The forbidden, therefore, is necessarily and *as such* a challenge to youth. A growing mind, quite rightly, desires to know the reason why; and the expanding personality instinctively rebels against restrictions for which rational grounds are not at once adduced. The rational grounds for virtues like truthfulness and honour are obvious; those on which sexual morality rests are less so, and their elucidation is made difficult by the mere fact that the past has based them mainly on a hushed taboo. But for principles and ideals adolescence hungers; and it finds no discipline too severe which it imposes on itself, or which it sees as a condition requisite for the attainment of a spontaneously chosen ideal. Wherever law is seen, not as a restriction imposed from without but as an expression of rational judgement and consent, youth is more insistent than age on its observance. No rules are so well observed as those made for or by a company of Boy Scouts. If youth "kicks over the traces" in regard to sex, that is mainly because it has been taught wrong things about it, or taught right things in the wrong way. I feel sure that the right kind of freedom and the right kind of discussion of ethical problems would in a generation or so bring about a change in this. In any

community in proportion as men become more self-determining, and therefore recognise law as the expression of their own sense of right, law-breaking ceases to seem heroic; and the discovery is made that championship of the right is in itself a high adventure. The policeman is to-day quite a popular character; while the place in the affections of the multitude once held by Dick Turpin is now occupied by Sherlock Holmes.

To prostitution, even among men who avail themselves of this institution, a repugnance, largely of an aesthetic character, is widely felt. But the main objection to it is that it is inhuman. A man who is deterred by no scruples of chastity in himself should yet shrink from conduct which means that, so far as a single individual can do anything, he is contributing his share towards the keeping in existence an institution which demands the dedication of a large number of fellow human beings to a life which of necessity is "nasty, brutish and short."

In the official *Report on Common Lodging-Houses* for 1927 it was noted that both the number of prostitutes and the scale of their remuneration had considerably declined of recent years, "owing (it was laconically remarked) to the competition of the amateur."

No further information was given in regard to "the amateur"; does she as a rule belong socially and economically to the same stratum of the population as the man with whom she consorts, or to a slightly lower stratum? If the latter, the man cannot be acquitted of some measure of inhumanity. Such relationships are less purely mechanical than those implied in prostitution, since they commonly have some basis in mutual affection and enjoyment; nevertheless, they do involve, though in a less grossly obvious way, the sacrifice of the higher interests of the woman for the sake of temporary delectation. The fact that she shares the delectation does not justify the man in encouraging her in a course of life certain to be morally disintegrating. We blame the mother who gives a child too many sweets, however much it cries for them; still more should we blame any one who gave a dipsomaniac the drink he craved. A man who is a woman's superior in rank, wealth, experience or strength of character, cannot disclaim all moral responsibility for the consequences which a liaison may have for her, even if it be she that invites it.

There are those who defend "the sowing of wild oats" on the ground that something like a "trial trip" is a good preliminary to marriage.

Metaphor at times is more potent than charity; it can cover a multitude, not only of sins, but of fallacies as well. Dig down below metaphor and find the fact. In this field "experiments" change the nature of the experimenter. Action is the begetter of habit—of mind and of body. Ask, then, whether the habit of mind and body engendered by such "trial trips" is one likely to make for or against happiness when marriage comes.

It will certainly produce instability of disposition.

> I've taken my fun where I've found it,
> An' now I must pay for my fun,
> For the more you 'ave known o' the others
> The less will you settle to one.

Again, when a man has been in the habit both in act and thought of classing together "women and wine" as things to be enjoyed, he cannot help, so far as the physical side of marriage is concerned, tending (though often without realising it) to approach his wife as if she also were primarily a means of indulgence—that is, in the last resort, behaving as if she were not a person but a thing. This subconscious attitude of the man will produce a half-repressed antagonism on the part of the wife; and a breakdown of harmony between them is

only the more likely to result if neither its origin nor its existence are clearly and consciously recognised.

Lastly, there is the risk of disease which can be communicated, often after a considerable interval of years, to the other party of the marriage, which may result in the blindness, disease or death of a child, or in the sterility or permanent invalidity of a wife. That belongs to a class of risk which no man has the right to take.[1]

Ideal and Practice

No one whose opinion need be taken seriously either defends prostitution or desires to abolish marriage.

> Monogamy [writes Mr. Havelock Ellis], in the fundamental biological sense, represents the natural order into which the majority of sexual facts will always naturally fall because it is the relationship which most adequately corresponds to all the physical and spiritual facts involved.[2]

But Mr. Ellis, Mr. Wells and other distinguished writers maintain that sexual unions of a variety of kinds outside normal marriage

[1] Infection from "amateurs" seems commoner than from "professionals." Cf. *Official History of the War: Medical Services* (Diseases), vol. ii. p. 121.

[2] Cf. I. Goldberg, *Havelock Ellis*, p. 204.

should be, not merely condoned, but recognised as legitimate and even socially advantageous.

That is the real question which the sociologist and the moral philosopher have to face to-day. Some writers go so far as to say baldly that the private relations of two persons of opposite sexes are nobody's business but their own. Mr. H. G. Wells, with the wider survey of the social reformer, naturally takes a less atomistic view.

> [Men and women of the future] will evolve their own conception of restraints, imperatives, and reasonable conditions, and fashion a new code.[1]

To me it seems that what society really needs is, not a new set of rules, but a new point of view; not a new code, but a new vision. We must clear our minds alike of the Manicheeism which regards the physical side of sex as merely disgusting, and of the Romanticism which makes the thrill of "love's young dream" the supreme spiritual value in life. Having done this, we shall see clearly that there is a proper place both for the physical and for the romantic side of sex; and that in this proper place they are both good. For rejoicing in that goodness we may quote a precedent—at least

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 760.

it is no surmise by some pupil of Mr. Havelock Ellis—that "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." But we shall see no less clearly that the proper place for these is not the first place. It is not the first place in any general conception of life as a whole; it is not even the first place in the relations to one another of men and women.

In marriage the richest range of love lies beyond the physical and the romantic. It must pass through these and include these, but it does not attain its maturity until these are felt to be beautiful and necessary incidents rather than essentials. Again, outside marriage there is open to men and women a relationship of a different kind; but this, too, is one of which the highest ranges can be realised only if the physical—and so far as possible the romantic also—is absolutely ruled out.

The unique advantage of the strictly monogamous marriage is that, by providing a healthy satisfaction for the instinct of sex on its physical side, it reduces mere excitation, and so makes easier an all-round self-realisation on a supra-sexual plane. Of this self-realisation, the first fruit is the lifting up of the relation of the married pair to a love which, because it faces

reality and expresses itself in sympathy and service, transcends romance—and which, with the advent of children receives further enrichment.

> How many loved your moments of glad grace,
> And loved your beauty with love false or true;
> But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
> And loved the sorrows of your changing face.

A second fruit is a widening and enrichment of friendships, for the man with other women, for the woman with other men. For this type of friendship reaches its highest possibility only on condition that the idea is absolutely ruled out that it is preliminary to a relation of a physical character. Such a friendship may, and often does, exist between persons neither of whom is married; but, except where there is some obvious impediment, like physical deformity or great discrepancy of age, it must be less unreserved and is apt to be precarious and insecure. Perhaps the greatest enemy of the institution of marriage is the jealousy which impels either husband or wife to treat as an injury, or in the slightest degree to discourage or resist, such friendships of the other. But human nature being what it is, this jealousy cannot be transcended unless husband and wife have reasonable security that these

friendships differ in kind from that unique relationship which they have with one another; and of this the only practical guarantee is the bond of honour which makes physical relationships with other persons unthinkable. Where, on the basis of this guarantee, both parties feel able to encourage one another to the freest enjoyment of such friendships, the addition of a rich variety of external friendship to the intimate sex and family life with the chosen partner brings about a fullness of life not otherwise to be attained.

To the woman marriage commonly brings children, and this is what normally affords satisfaction to the creative element in her nature, though, if there are no children, this may be sublimated in a variety of ways. Man, too, must have his distinctive creative work. For him, too, love of mate and friendship are not in themselves enough. The greatest evil wrought by the romantic tradition is that it has taught women to ignore in men a need which in their own case finds satisfaction in a different way. There is justice in the indignant protest of Mr. H. G. Wells.

> No man has ever done any great creative thing, painted splendidly, followed up subtle curiosities as a philosopher or explorer, organised an industry, set a

land in order, invented machines, built lovely buildings, primarily for the sake of a woman. These things can only be done well and fully for their own sakes, because of a distinctive drive from within; they arise from that sublimated egoism we call self-realisation. Some women have prevented and thwarted the self-realisation of men, and others have protected and aided men, but from first to last they have been accessory.[1]

I do not, however, like the word "accessory" in this connection. A marriage is a success only if the older and nobler word "helpmeet" is the more appropriate as a description of the wife's relation. There is nothing humiliating to a woman in being "the junior partner of a firm." Many great men—Darwin and Gladstone are the first names that come into my head—did what they did solely because their wives knew exactly how, when and where to remove a burden or supplement a weakness in the man. And who does not know men who, in the common phrase, have been "made" by their wives? But the possibility of a woman doing this depends on her being in a relation to the man which gives opportunity, not for "inspiration" in the romantic sense, but for "mutual help and comfort" in the sympathy and practical service of daily life together; and this means that the woman is the man's helpmeet,

[1] H. G. Wells, *op. cit.* p. 783.

not in the capacity of mistress, but as wife.[1] Again, even where, as often happens, a man's work or temperament is such that he can derive inspiration, sympathy and practical help from a woman other than his wife, the extent to which he will do this successfully will generally depend on the extent to which his relation to that woman is kept on the plane of friendship rather than of romance.

Sex at the physical—and even at the romantic—level, excites; but it does not inspire, except it be first transmuted into something very

[1] In the modern world it is open to a woman to follow one of the professions, to organise a business, to write. In that case she, too, will do these things "for their own sakes because of a distinctive drive from within," and not primarily for the sake of a man. And if she marries and continues to do these things well, then for her, too, the place of the husband will be, in Mr. Wells's phrase, "accessory." With a woman of genius, or one with a professional career, the husband need feel no humiliation in taking the place of helpmeet to the wife—in being, so to speak, Prince Consort to her Queen. But such cases will be exceptional, for two reasons. First, in most well-mated pairs each to some extent leans on the other; but the psychological make-up of the sexes, possibly enhanced by custom and social tradition, has brought it about that in the majority of cases the woman likes to feel that in big things she leans on the man and that in smaller things he leans on her. Secondly, when a marriage bears fruit in children, the woman becomes the one who is doing the "great creative thing" arising "from that sublimated egoism we call self-realisation," and the husband is the "accessory." This chance of "playing first fiddle" the man can never have.

different. The haunting vision of Beatrice was the inspiration of the *Divina Commedia.* But the poet's mind would have been affected in quite a different way by a successful intrigue, or even marriage, with his heroine. Dante, being the kind of man he was, would doubtless, in any case, have written an immortal poem; but it would have started from another fount of inspiration. Sex is the raw material from which the best, but also the worst, things in human life are made. The Manicheean view of it is a mistake, but it is not one without foundation in experience. The poets at times make us forget this. By the art of Shakespeare the loves of Antony and Cleopatra are clothed with a gorgeous pageant-glory; but, under the microscope of history, what actually happened makes a sorry, sordid tale. In real life Passion is a steed that must be ridden on the curb.

In the last resort that is why I believe that what is wanted is not a new code, but—along with a new understanding of its reasonableness—a more effective observance of the principle that, outside marriage, sexual intercourse is an anti-social act.

But, granted this as an ideal, must there not, considering the complex circumstances of mod-

ern life and the infinite variety of personal taste and need, be large allowance made for exceptions to such a simple rigid rule?

My reply is that, wherever sex is concerned, emotion is so strong and self-deception so universal that a principle to which exceptions are allowed, at the discretion of the parties themselves, is in practice very little better than having no principle at all. To call Cupid "blind" is grotesquely to understate the facts. To be blind is merely *not* to see things which exist. Sexual excitation, doubtless, brings this about; but it also makes men see things which are not there at all, besides seeing much that *is* there in a wholly false perspective. When passion is the arbiter, my own case is always recognised to be exceptional. There never were in history lovers like "we two," never were any kept apart by a fate as hard as ours. When Aphrodite whispers in my ear, a principle which admits no exception may nerve me to resist; but if *any* exception is admitted, my case is certain to be one.[1]

[1] This principle has the additional advantage that it is one which from its intrinsic nature can admit of no "border-line" cases. Where sex is concerned border-line cases will always by the parties concerned appear to be over the border. Which means that the border-line—for other people and for them next time—has moved on that much. If, for example,

It is, we have seen, of the essence of any rule which expresses a principle of moral obligation that it binds in secret as much as in public. And in normal cases the rule in question works out to the individual's benefit. We are apt to forget how often the renunciation of a pleasure or a personal convenience for the sake of principle or public service acts as a moral tonic. A man or woman who has renounced nothing and refused nothing is a moral weakling. There are cases where renunciation involves real loss—I shall return to that point later. But, up to a certain point, strain and tension are necessary to development. There is no place for the athlete who has never "run himself out," the poet who has never agonised to find the right word, or the philosopher who has found all problems easy. A route march from which no one came back tired would do little to train a battalion for the stress of war; and a code of sexual behaviour which could be kept without any effort would be spiritually enervating. A morality which has lost all austerity, has lost its cutting edge.

you say in framing your rule that engaged couples may behave as if already married, the rule will be stretched to cover couples secretly engaged, and very soon to couples thinking of being engaged, couples wondering what it would feel like to be temporarily engaged, and so on.

But though renunciation for the sake of principle is morally creative, renunciation for fear of consequences is not. For that reason, to make social ostracism, to the extent that was customary in the Victorian age, the penalty of a sexual lapse is a mistake. In regard to sex, as in regard to every other sphere of conduct, there comes a point in depravity at which society must take measures to protect itself against the individual. But excessive punishment, mechanically and unsympathetically applied, is more likely to generate hypocrisy than to raise the level of moral practice. This point is of importance. Discussions of the ethics of sex are often vitiated by confusing the value of a principle with the assessment of punishment for its infraction. We do not view sheep-stealing as a virtue because we now think hanging was an excessive penalty; we may regard Parnell as hardly treated without approving of adultery. The tendency of certain types of conduct is to be socially and spiritually constructive, that of others is to be socially and spiritually disintegrating. It matters supremely to any society that it should have a clear principle for distinguishing between these two types, and that its average members should be able to say at once, This is on the side of right;

that is on the side of wrong. It also matters, but it matters less, how many of its members fail, through the frailty of human nature, to live up to that principle. Granted in any society a clear knowledge of the right direction, then the steady pressure of the tone and example of the better elements—which always elicits an instinctive approval from the majority—will gradually elevate the average standard of conduct.

Christian opinion has missed the true emphasis of the teaching and practice of Christ. On the question of what is right and what is wrong in regard to sex His attitude is unambiguous. But He shocked the religious public of His day by the leniency He showed towards offenders. He ate and drank with publicans and harlots—without disguising His opinion that they needed to repent. "Neither do I condemn thee" was His word to an adulteress—but He added, "Go, sin no more." "Judge not" was said to those disciples who were to be the regenerating nucleus of a regenerated world; they were to serve the cause of righteousness, not by the severity of their condemnation, but by the standard of their own lives. They were to be "the salt of the earth"—to be that was the adventure to which He called them. If that

failed, there was no other way, "if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it (the world) be salted."

It is in the light of this last saying that I would approach the most difficult question of all. What are we to say about the principle of sexual abstinence outside marriage where it involves, not merely a renunciation of pleasure or even some injury to health, but what seems to be grave spiritual loss? There is a large variety of these hard cases, but it will suffice that I take as an example what seems to me to be the hardest case of all: that of the woman to whom marriage is impossible, but who feels that, apart from motherhood, her personality cannot realise its full development and that her soul starves. In this country the number of such is at the present moment exceptionally large. A million men fell in the war, and perhaps another million are precluded from marrying by injury, disease or the widespread poverty consequent on the war. That means that, perhaps, two million women, who might otherwise have married, will not do so.

So from the soft air, infinite and pearly,
Breathed a desire with which she could not cope,
Could not, methinks, so eager and so early,
Chant to her loveliness the dirge of hope:

Could not have done with weeping and with laughter
Leaving men angry and sweet love unknown,
Could not go forth upon a blank hereafter
Weak and a woman, aimless and alone.

All such should endeavour unshrinkingly to bring up into the clear daylight of conscious realisation the exact nature of their needs and their desires—at the lowest as well as at the highest level. The attainment of a self-knowledge that can face up to the frank and full admission of needs, weaknesses and desires, the mere existence of which most women have been taught to ignore or to condemn, will make a demand on courage and sincerity which, adequately responded to, will be in itself the beginning of a moral rebirth. Self-knowledge of this kind is hard to reach without the help of frank discussion with some wise adviser; but it is the first condition of a redirection and sublimation of unfulfillable desires, and may make of these the raw material of creative energy, instead of being a source of barren and exhausting, because largely unconscious, inward struggle. Sometimes it may break the power of an infatuation by revealing it as a "projection" upon some individual of a phantasy which is really the expression of a quite other "repressed" and therefore unrecognised desire.

Always in some degree self-knowledge is liberation.

At any rate, by the unmarried, sexual intercourse without the hope and definite intention of bearing children ought, I feel sure, to be renounced. But the plea of the woman ready to bear a child, that to allow the war to deprive her and so many other women of the chance of motherhood is unnecessarily to intensify its evil consequences, stands ethically on an entirely different plane.

That plea is strong. And yet . . . not only for these, but for all whose case is hard, there is shown us, I believe, a more excellent way. All may not hear the call to follow it; but it is the way of high adventure. For the future of the world, the moral impoverishment brought about by the war is of more serious moment than the economic. In every sphere of conduct, not that of sex alone, the earth requires to be re-salted. But nowhere does there exist a salt other than the lives of men and women ready to sacrifice what costs them much for the sake of principle. To effect the moral re-creation of man Christ faced the cross; our lesser sacrifices contribute to that same end. And if at times the sacrifice required seems almost to amount to crucifixion, we can, by our

mental attitude towards it, make that crucifixion to be a voluntary endurance spiritually one with that act of Christ. Then it will become a source of moral power—for others, and, *after a while,* for ourselves. That pain can be made creative is the secret of Christianity. "My son," said a priest to one I know, "it does not matter what you lose, so long as you offer it up alongside the Sacrifice of Christ." It may be that the hour of darkness will extort the cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"; it may be a long time before there follows the deep peace that can say, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." But, however we may feel, the work will have been done.

The cross looks grim. But one thing is sure. That dream of perfect bliss which lures us to evade it will not come true.

> Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment
> Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.

The primrose path of dalliance is early overrun with briars; and if we must be pierced with thorns, it is more kingly to wear them as a crown.

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